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• How the Commonwealth armies **turned the tide** in the east

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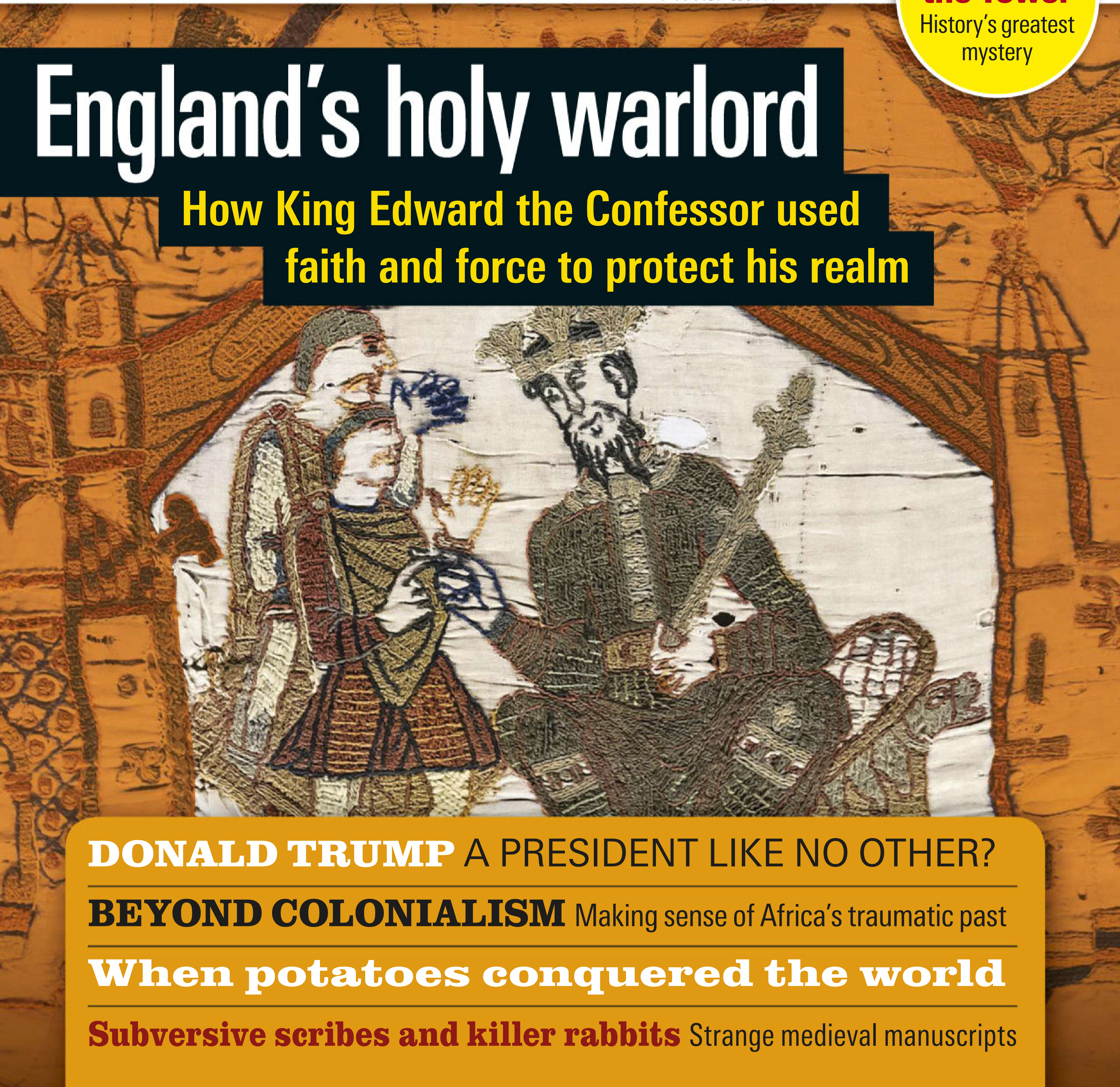
History's greatest mystery



England's holy warlord

How King Edward the Confessor used faith and force to protect his realm

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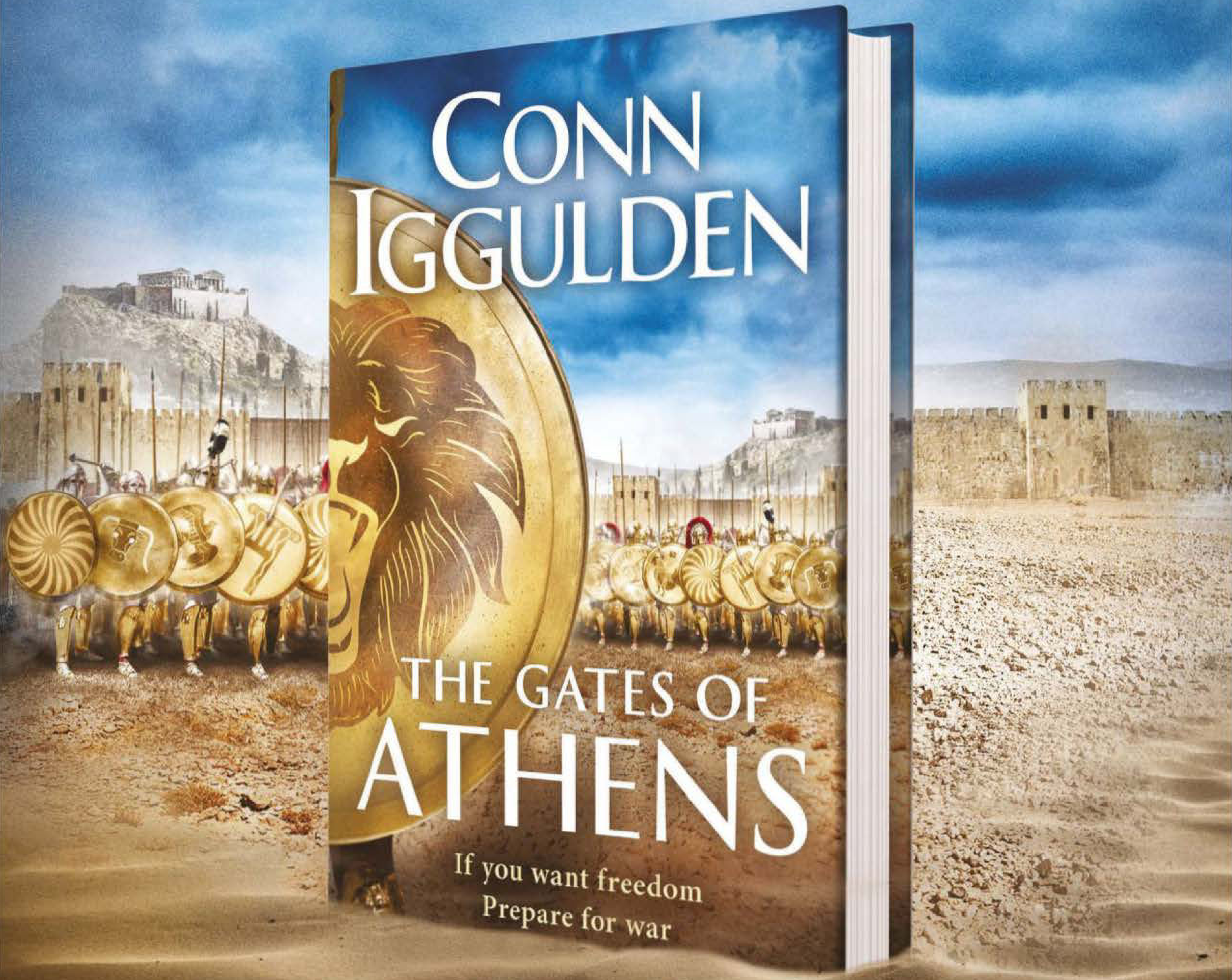

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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2020

“When we think of **King Edward the Confessor** today, two images probably spring to mind. One is the elderly presence in the Bayeux Tapestry whose death sets the scene for the dynamic figures of Harold and William to do battle for the throne. The second, is a man of extreme piety – “little more than a monk in a crown”, as Tom Licence writes in this month’s edition.

By focusing on these two aspects, however, we miss a different side of Edward, whose successful 24-year reign was testament to his diplomatic vigour and military acumen. In this month’s cover feature, Tom offers a more rounded picture of Edward and also tackles the ongoing debate about whether he offered William the crown. You can read his piece on page 46.

Earlier this year we marked the **75th anniversary of VE Day**, but of course that didn’t spell the end of the Second World War commemorations. In this issue, we explore the finale to the war against Japan, beginning with Diana Preston’s feature on the development of **the atom bomb**, followed by Jonathan Fennell on how British and Commonwealth forces **turned the tide in the east** after the disasters of 1942. Turn to page 20 for those.

You’ll also find articles on **medieval marginalia**, African attempts to move beyond **the legacy of colonialism**, the historical roots of **Trump’s policy agenda**, and how the potato became one of the **world’s most successful crops**. It’s a veritable historical feast.

Rob Attar
Editor

THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Licence

Legitimacy, holy mystique, prioritising peace but crushing enemies – these were the ingredients of a successful reign. We admire the warrior Harold of 1066, but Edward the Confessor teaches us more about kingship.

Tom re-evaluates the reign of Edward the Confessor on page 46

Afua Hirsch

Each African country we explore in my new series had a story to tell that we felt was a little bit different to what people are used to hearing. Africa has so much to offer the world, including the sheer brilliance of the art it’s producing now.

Afua reveals how Africa is looking beyond its traumatic past on page 39

Diana Preston

While researching the development of the atom bomb, I was fortunate enough to interview survivors of Hiroshima, the last living chemist to work with Marie Curie, and Nobel laureate Joseph Rotblat, who quit the Manhattan Project on moral grounds.

Diana chronicles the race to develop the atom bomb on page 20

MORE FROM US

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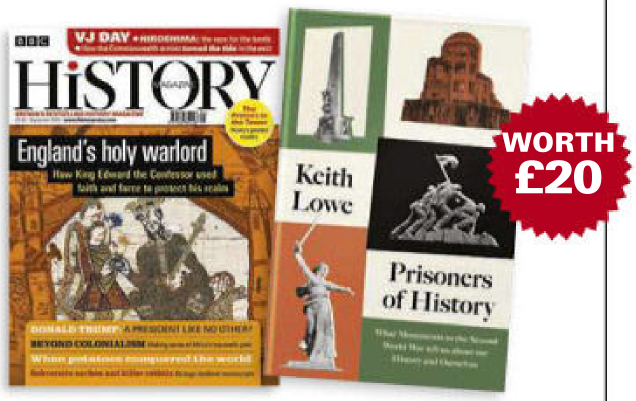

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COVER IMAGE: EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, THE ANGLO-SAXON KING ON HIS THRONE, FROM THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY – GETTY IMAGES.
THIS PAGE, STEVE SAYERS/GETTY IMAGES

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Rebecca Earle charts how colonialism and industrialism helped propel the humble spud to worldwide domination

Discover how British and Commonwealth forces turned disaster into triumph against Japan on page 28

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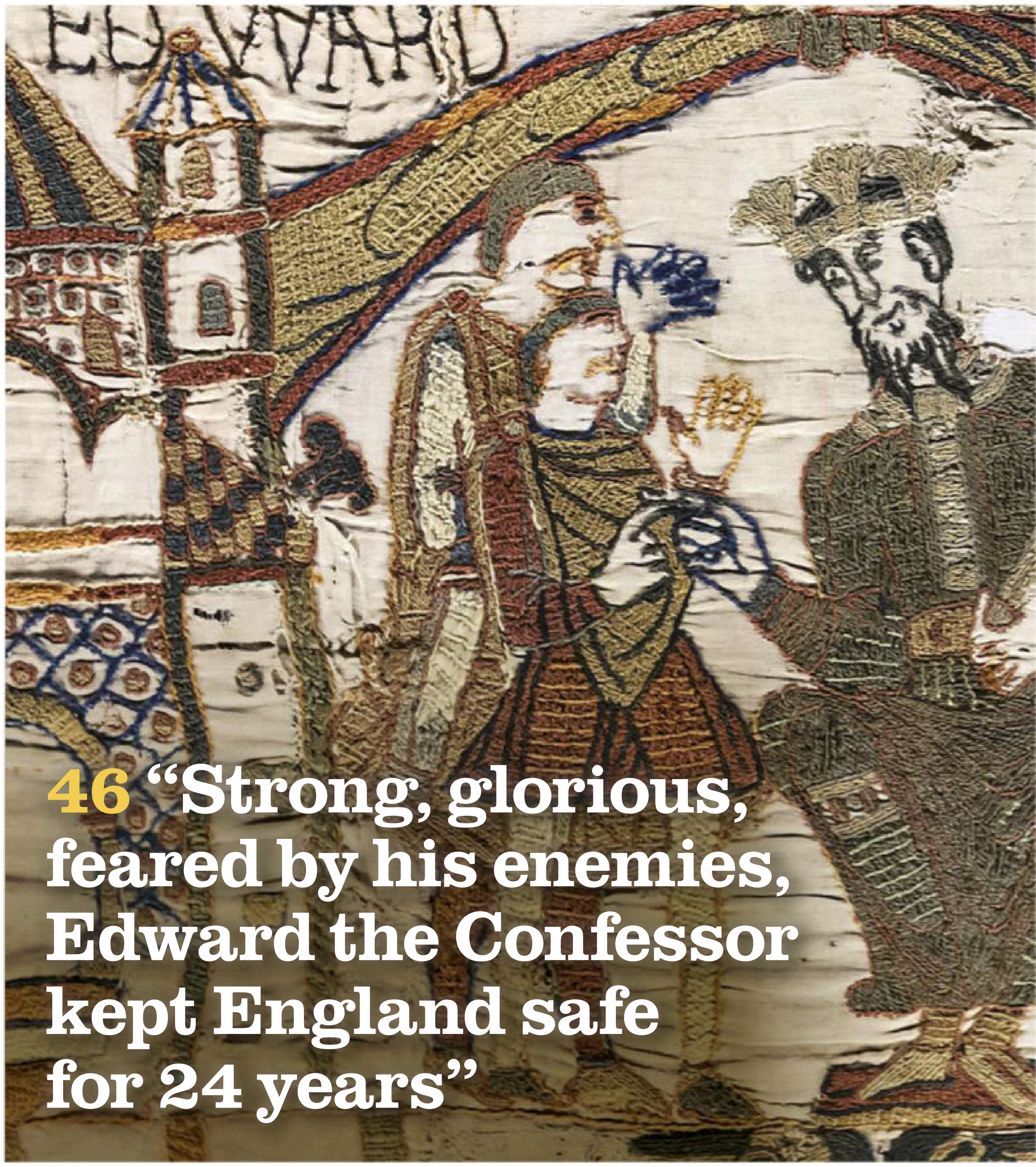

46 "Strong, glorious, feared by his enemies, Edward the Confessor kept England safe for 24 years"

BBC/BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY/MARY EVANS/GETTY IMAGES

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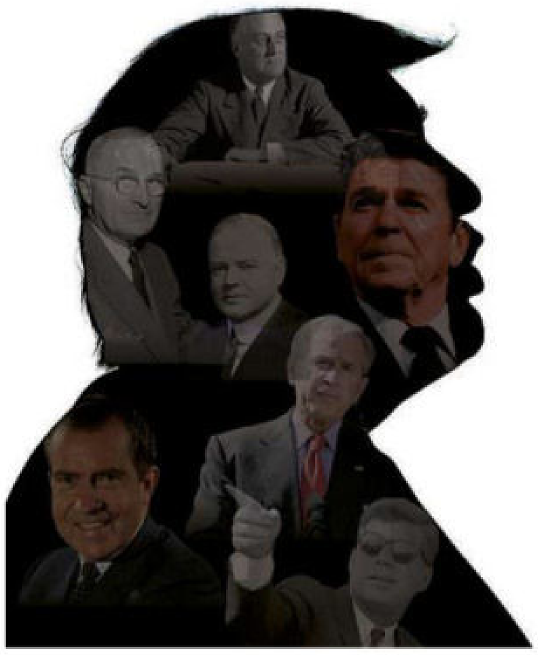

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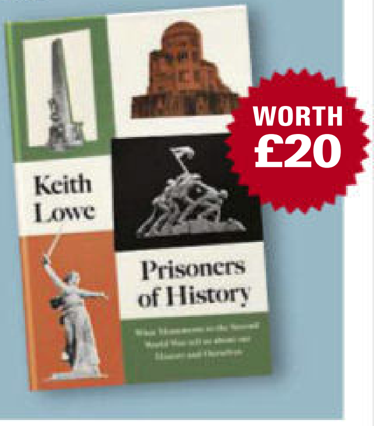

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Crew members tread carefully along the slanting deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Yorktown* after bomb damage received during the battle of Midway, June 1942

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

EYE-OPENER

Financial ruin

A Maya temple looms over the jungle at a site at Palenque, in southern Mexico. It's among the many ancient sites that could be at risk following a huge cut in the money set aside to preserve the nation's heritage.

Announced in June, the cuts represent a 75 per cent reduction in the budget of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, the body responsible for maintaining museums, archives, monuments and historical sites. Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, insisted that the funds needed to be reallocated to hospitals as the effects of the ongoing coronavirus crisis continue to be felt around the world. Mexico has been particularly badly affected by the pandemic, with more than 30,000 deaths recorded by the start of July. However, the move was greeted with dismay by researchers and historians, with 6,000 signing a letter asking Obrador to reconsider the move.

ALAMY

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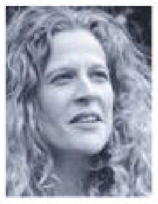
TALKING POINTS

The write stuff



Social media isn't always about discord and disagreement – as a recent discussion about the most inspiring historical writers proved. **ANNA WHITELOCK** considers the contenders

An inspiring conversation unfolded on Twitter after Chris Millard (@chrismillard83) asked: "In your humble opinions, which historian is the best, most stylish, or most lucid writer?"

There were many suggestions, some more familiar than others. Among the discoveries for me was the late German historian **Thomas Nipperdey**, who Alexander Schmidt (@alexchalkeus) believes "rewards those who made the painful effort to learn academic German with an exceptionally elegant prose". Susan D Amussen (@susandamussen), and many others, suggested one of my all-time favourites: the Canadian-American early modern specialist **Natalie Zemon Davis**. As Sharon Strocchia (@SharonStrocchia) put it: "I use her essays to teach prose writing. Impeccable topic sentences, brilliant paragraph structure, human warmth and voice. Plus she's a master of the lost art of the essay."

Another much-cited name was social historian **Carolyn Steedman**. Mary Ellen Hicks (@DrMaryHicks) pointed to her "profoundly literary sensibility… I've never read a historian who can as effectively evoke emotions". That was a sentiment echoed by Dave Hitchcock (@Hitchcockian), who wrote: "Carolyn Steedman has a gift. *Poetry for Historians* [her latest book] is simply excellent."

Rebecca Hutchison (@becksh78) couldn't decide between "**Adam Tooze**, **Tony Judt** and **Robin Lane Fox**". Claire L Jones (@Claire_L_Jones) tweeted: "For lucidity, I love [historian of France] **Colin Jones**. I think his writing is so clear and seemingly effortless." Andy King (@andykingsoton) suggested a number of medievalists, but concluded: "I think I'd have to give the prize to **John Gillingham**, who is vastly entertaining, as well as being impeccably scholarly – a neat trick!"

Nicholas Walmsley (@Hulegu) pointed to **Jonathan Spence**, a historian of China, "for the way he arranges and incorporates archival materials, legal documents and travellers' accounts into novelistic structures, so that *The Question of Hu* reads like a novel and the *Death of Woman Wang* reads like a collection of short stories. Utterly brilliant."

For Pedr Davies (@davies_pedr), **Peter Hopkirk** was the only choice. "His writings about central Asian history in the 19th and 20th centuries are glorious, and just bring the history to life," he wrote. "That's good history writing: it is not about prose or fashion, but about accentuating the story. Enjoyment and understanding are key."

The names kept coming, but the last for now is **Barbara Tuchman**, the US historian and author who was dubbed "legendary" by Lucy Adlington (@historywardrobe). She pointed to Tuchman and her insightful line: "Research is endlessly seductive; writing is hard work." On that point, I think we can certainly agree. H

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

> **"Good history writing is about accentuating the story. Enjoyment is key"**

US historian Barbara Tuchman in 1966. Twitter users applauded her "legendary" scholarship in a debate about the finest historical writing

Mount Okmok, a volcano in Alaska, emits a plume of ash in 2008. An eruption thousands of years earlier may have contributed to the Roman Republic's end

GETTY IMAGES/NASA-AFP

ANCIENT WORLD

Ash hints at volcanic force in Rome's fall

From political upheavals to the deaths of key leaders, many forces contributed to the collapse of the Roman Republic in the first century BC. Now the authors of a new study have used geological data, climate modelling and historical records to suggest an additional factor: the eruption of a volcano 6,000 miles away.

The team analysed volcanic ash preserved in Arctic ice cores, matching it to a sample taken from Mount Okmok in Alaska and dating it to an eruption in 43 BC. They then set about exploring the impact of the eruption and found that, although it remains one of the largest of the past few thousand years, it wasn't the magnitude that caused the most far-reaching consequences, but the nature of the particles it spewed out. Because these particles reflect sunlight and stay in the atmosphere for years, they temporarily altered the climate. Using climate models, researchers estimated that temperatures in the Mediterranean may have dropped by as much as 7°C, while rainfall increased dramatically. These weather fluctuations ruined crops, and famine ensued.

The study's authors stress that it's too simplistic to claim a direct link with the downfall of the Roman Republic. They do suggest, however, that the eruption exacerbated the social and political unrest of an already volatile era. "It's an incredible coincidence that it happened exactly in the waning years of the Roman Republic, when things were falling apart," said one of the study's authors, Joseph McConnell. H

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

Experts embark on first Viking ship excavation in a century

Archaeologists in Norway have begun work excavating a Viking ship – the first such project to take place in more than a century.

The vessel was discovered using ground-penetrating radar at a burial site in Gjellestad, in the south-east of the country, in 2018. Although experts were initially reluctant to excavate the remains, because wet timber can be damaged by exposure to air, the urgency of the project increased after a test dig carried out last year indicated high levels of decomposition and the presence of fungus on the hull. Despite its decay, the find is significant because it's one of only four well-preserved Viking ships ever to have been found in Norway.

Previous analysis suggests that the 20-metre-long oaken ship was built between the eighth and tenth century AD, and would have been used to travel long distances. The new phase of the research is expected to last five months, and experts will use the latest techniques to help reconstruct the original shape of the vessel and explore the Viking burial mounds and longhouses that were also found at the site.

An artist's rendering of the Gjellestad Viking ship, which experts hope to analyse in the coming months

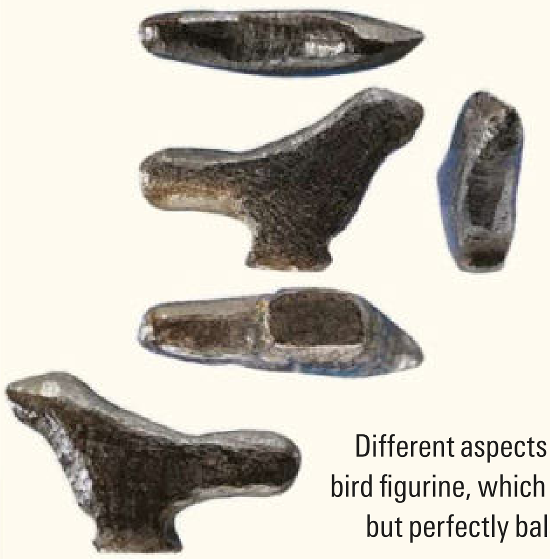
Team finds huge Neolithic site

A ring of shafts found near Stonehenge may be the largest prehistoric structure ever found in the UK. Each of the 20 pits is at least 5 metres deep and 10 metres in diameter, and was dug over 4,500 years ago. Although several of the shafts had already been found, remote-sensing technology revealed them to be more deliberately placed than previously thought. They encircle an ancient settlement at Durrington Walls and may have acted as a boundary for a sacred area.

The newly discovered ring surrounds Durrington Walls, 2 miles from Stonehenge

Institutions cut ties with Starkey

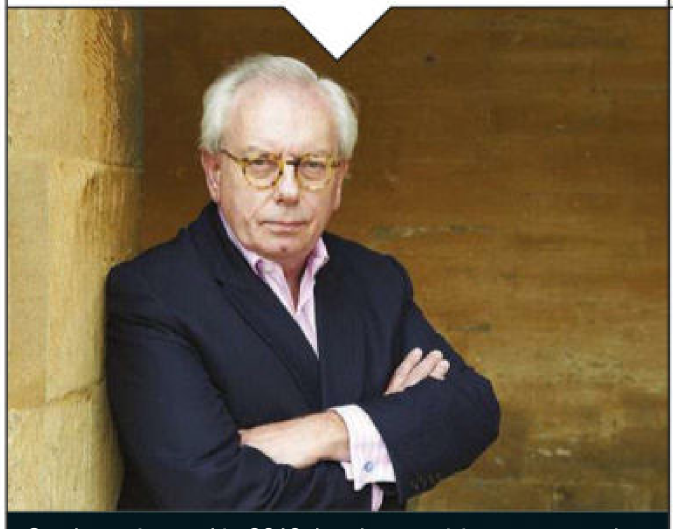
Historian David Starkey has resigned from his honorary fellowship at the University of Cambridge following an online interview in which he suggested that slavery wasn't genocide because of the survival of "so many damn blacks". The remarks also led to the Tudor expert losing positions at the Mary Rose Trust and Canterbury Christ Church University, as well as a book deal with UK publisher HarperCollins. Starkey later apologised for his "awful clumsiness" and "deplorably inflammatory" language.



Different aspects of the bird figurine, which is tiny but perfectly balanced

Bird effigy is oldest Chinese art

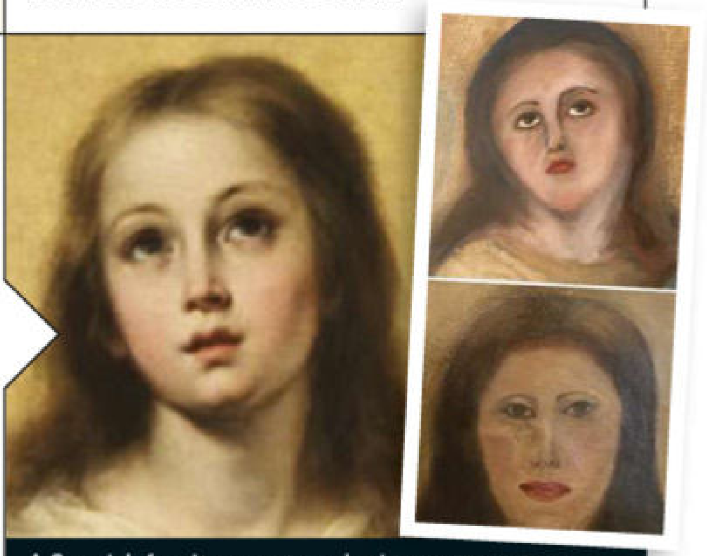
A figurine of a bird, made from burnt bone and measuring less than 2cm in length, is the earliest Chinese artwork ever discovered, experts say. The statuette, found in China's Henan province, is approximately 13,500 years old, more than eight millennia older than the previous earliest known date of such a sculpture. The artefact is incredibly well preserved, revealing the skill and care with which it was made – and allowing researchers to identify each of the intricate methods used in its creation.



Starkey, pictured in 2010, has lost positions at several institutions following his comments about slavery

Botched repair ruins painting

Conservation experts in Spain are calling for tighter regulation of the profession after a painting of the Immaculate Conception was rendered unrecognisable by supposed 'restoration'. A private collector paid €1,200 (£1,000) to have the image of the Virgin Mary cleaned and restored, only for it to be increasingly damaged. It's the latest in a series of ruinous art repairs in the nation, the most notorious of which is a picture of Jesus that gained online fame in 2012 and was dubbed 'monkey Christ'. **H**



A Spanish furniture restorer had two attempts at repairing the Virgin Mary's face – with little success

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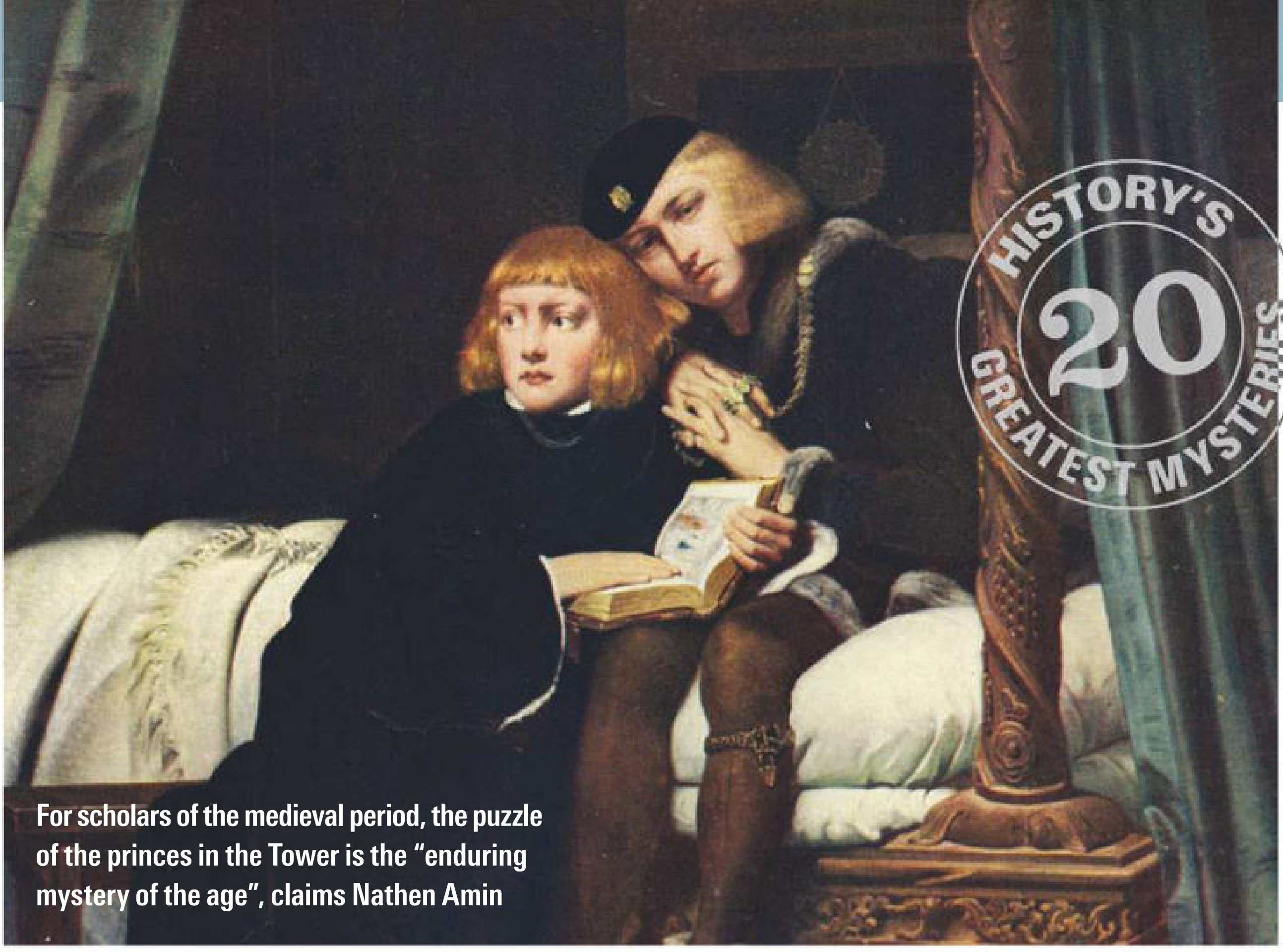


For scholars of the medieval period, the puzzle of the princes in the Tower is the "enduring mystery of the age", claims Nathen Amin

Princes in the Tower are history's greatest mystery

Did Richard III order the murder of the princes in the Tower? This question, which has fuelled much debate and controversy for centuries, has emerged as the clear winner in our recent poll of history's greatest mysteries.

Back in our June edition, we published an extended feature on 20 historical conundrums – all nominated by experts – and asked you to vote for your favourite. The fate of Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York, received 35 per cent of the votes – almost three times as many as the building of Stonehenge, which came in at second place. Also making the top five were: "What happened to Jesus's body?", "Why did the Roanoke colony vanish into thin air?" and "What is the Voynich Manuscript trying to tell us?" You can see the full rundown of results in the column on the right.

The princes in the Tower disappeared in the summer of 1483, early in the reign of their uncle, Richard III. While many point to King Richard as having orchestrated their killing, a number of alternative suggestions exist, with Henry VII and Margaret Beaufort among the other popular suspects. Some also believe that either or both of the princes may have survived and perhaps returned as one of the Yorkist pretenders to the throne during the early Tudor period. These theories and others have been bolstered by their appearance in fictional accounts, from Shakespeare's *Richard III* to the novels of Philippa Gregory.

Historian and author Nathen Amin, who nominated the mystery in our June edition, is not surprised that his choice has topped the poll. "Anyone who studies the medieval period, or is interested in the Tudors or the Plantagenets, knows that the princes in the Tower is the great enduring mystery of the age," he commented. "It has all the classic ingredients of a mystery: shadowy conspiracies, royal involvement and innocent victims condemned to their fates by the machinations of those around them. In effect it is a royal whodunit, and who isn't captivated by one of them? And of course, it is unresolved, and it's likely that it never will be resolved either."

If you'd like to explore some of these mysteries further, then do check out the podcast interviews we've recorded with historians, including Nathen, about their nominations. And we're going to be taking an in-depth look at the princes in the Tower in a special podcast series on the mystery, due to be released later this year. You'll find all these episodes at *historyextra.com/podcast*

> **"It has the classic ingredients of a mystery: shadowy conspiracies and innocent victims"**

MORE FROM US You can read the original nominations for the **20 historical mysteries** on our website at *historyextra.com/greatest-mystery*

THE GREATEST MYSTERY

The full results of our **history's 20 greatest mysteries** poll

1. Did Richard III order the murder of the princes in the Tower?

2. Who built Stonehenge – and why?

3. What happened to Jesus's body?

4. Why did the Roanoke colony vanish into thin air?

5. What is the Voynich Manuscript trying to tell us?

6. Where did the Ninth Legion meet its doom?

7. Was the Trojan War fact or fiction?

8. Where is Cleopatra's tomb?

9. Where did Amelia Earhart spend her tragic last moments?

10. Who was the architect of Anne Boleyn's downfall?

11. Why did medieval Europeans dance themselves to death?

12. Could Roman soldiers have reached China?

13. What disaster struck the Franklin Expedition?

14. Did Agatha Christie engineer her own disappearance?

15. Where is King Harold buried?

16. Why did Mao's chosen successor flee China?

17. What befell Abu Bakr and his fleet?

18. What secrets do the kofun tombs hold?

19. What was the Feejee Mermaid?

20. Why was the world fooled by the Cottingley Fairies?

Amelia Earhart sits in the cockpit of a plane. Her disappearance came in at number nine in our poll

GETTY IMAGES

MICHAEL WOOD ON…
SOCIETY AND FAME

"Reality TV has changed our culture in a way that historians can't ignore"

The changes in television during my time making films have been truly astonishing. July marked 20 years since the first episode of *Big Brother* aired on British TV, and Radio 4 recently broadcast a fascinating show called *Watching Us* (available on BBC Sounds), which explores how reality TV has given birth to new kinds of societal attitudes pervasive enough to mark a change in our culture that historians simply cannot ignore. It put me in mind of the turbulent events of 1968 and a book that left its mark on us students then, even though we didn't see as clearly as its author the direction in which things were heading (to be fair to us, this was a universe with only two television channels, and no internet or mobile phones!). The book was *The Society of the Spectacle* and it was written by Guy Debord, who played a key role in the May 1968 revolt. Not lacking in self-confidence, Debord called it "the most important book of the 20th century".

Debord put forward a striking view of modern western mass society. "All of life now presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*," he wrote. "Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation." Depressed by mass production and consumption, and the hegemony of governments and media over everyday life, Debord saw 'authentic' social life replaced by its representation, going from *being* to *having* to *appearing*. This was the moment in history in which, he argued, "the commodity completed its colonisation of social life".

This is where Channel 4's *Big Brother* comes in. In the past 20 years, a perfect storm has blown up with the rise of reality television, smartphones and social media; changing culture, society and behaviour – and even democracy itself. Future historians will study it with the same interest as they do the Mass Observation project of the 1930s and 1940s. In *Big Brother*, 10 strangers went into a house to live under constant camera surveillance. To live – and to perform. But at what point did one become the other?

The idea took off, with proliferating cable channels producing more and more cheap content, enlisting viewers to be part of the show. Within 10 years it gave birth to new kinds of formats such as *The Only Way Is Essex*, in which the lives of ordinary people became the subject of the show. Its scenes may have been constructed, but the idea was that the relationships and the emotions were real. 'Constructed reality' even became a category at the Bafta awards.

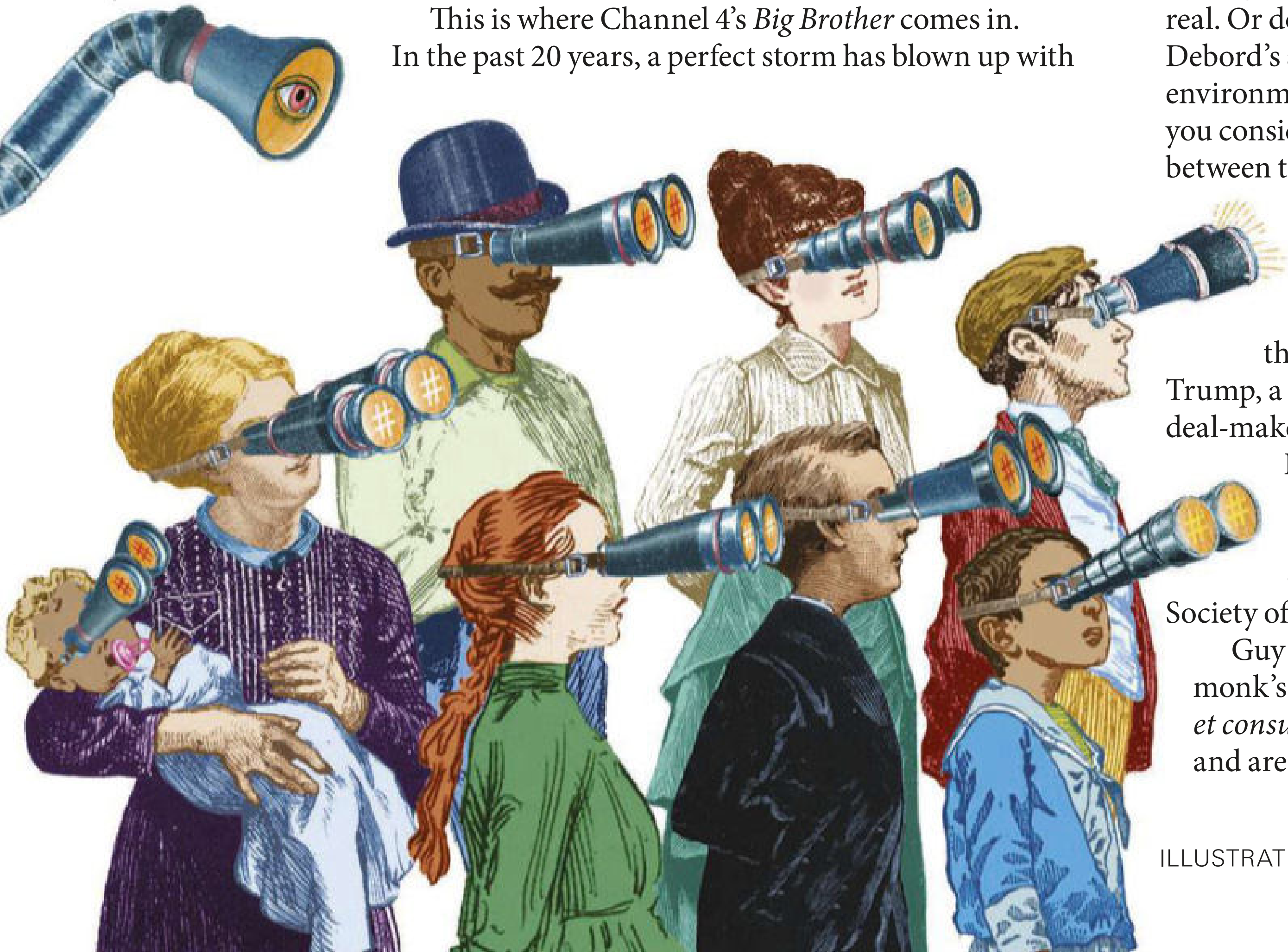
It was at this point that social media took off. Facebook, which had been devised in 2004, suddenly exploded; today, it has a billion users. Now you, too, could be a star: on a democratic platform such as YouTube, you could have a TV channel of your own with an inbuilt audience, followers, opinions and ratings. YouTube's influence has continued to grow: its most popular channel now has 140 million subscribers. On these digital platforms, as Debord foresaw, fame "has acquired infinitely more importance than the value of anything one might actually be capable of doing".

Streaming your life changes how you behave. You must be emotional, create drama, turn every mundane act into a piece of self-expression to be shared with the world – editing and performing a version of yourself even if is not real. Or does the version online now constitute the reality? Debord's assertion that the future would be a 'pseudo-environment' starts to seem incredibly prescient when you consider he was writing in the pre-digital age. The line between truth and fiction has become truly blurred.

And finally, inevitably, democracy itself is impacted. 'Fake news' is propagated everywhere and online opinion is groomed, manipulated and harvested. The crowning product of this headlong 20-year reality rush is Donald Trump, a reality TV star who acted out the role of a great deal-maker who got things done – even though, as Pulitzer Prize-winner David Cay Johnson's 2016 book documented, he had no such talent, only the ability to self-promote. Trump's election as US president was the triumph of the Society of the Spectacle.

Guy Debord's final film took its title from a medieval monk's riddle. It is a palindrome: *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* ('We enter the circle in the night, and are consumed by the fire'). Its answer? Moths.

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of England* (Viking, 2010)



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ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in September in history

2 SEPTEMBER 1898

Churchill charges into action at Khartoum

British technology wins the day at the battle of Omdurman

It was dawn on 2 September 1898, and in Omdurman, the young Lieutenant Winston Churchill was breathing hard with excitement.

After almost two decades of war in the Sudan, Herbert Kitchener's British army had finally reached Khartoum. Against them, stood tens of thousands of Dervish swordsmen. The enemy army, remembered Churchill, was a spectacular sight. Stretching "four miles from end to end... this mighty army advanced swiftly. Above them waved hundreds of banners, and the sun, glinting on many thousands of hostile spear points, spread a sparkling cloud."

For Churchill, the highlight of the battle was undoubtedly the swashbuckling cavalry charge of his 21st Lancers. Many of his fellows were unhorsed, and were forced to defend themselves against a tide of enemy fighters. Churchill himself was almost surrounded, and only escaped by blasting his way out with his Mauser pistol.

But the real story was the triumph of British technology. Although Kitchener's men were outnumbered, they had Maxim machine guns and dum-dum bullets. Armed with older weapons, the Dervishes did not stand a chance. Within hours, some 10,000 of them were killed, while Kitchener lost just 48 men. "It was not a battle," wrote one observer, "but an execution." Afterwards, even Churchill shook his head at the sight of the fallen. "There was nothing dulce et decorum about the Dervish dead," he wrote. "Yet these were as brave men as ever walked the Earth."

Churchill in his military uniform in 1898 – the year he rode into battle in the Sudan

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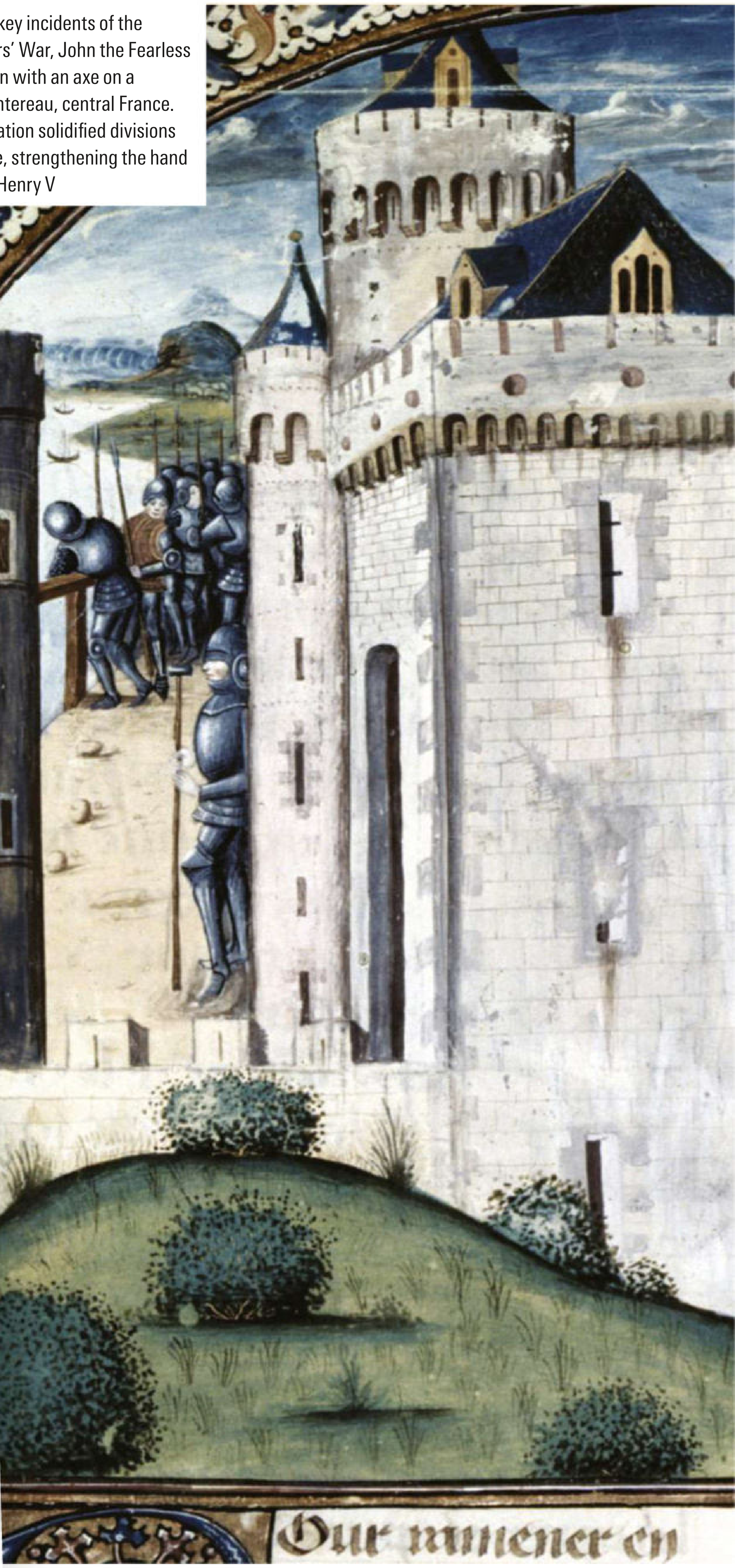
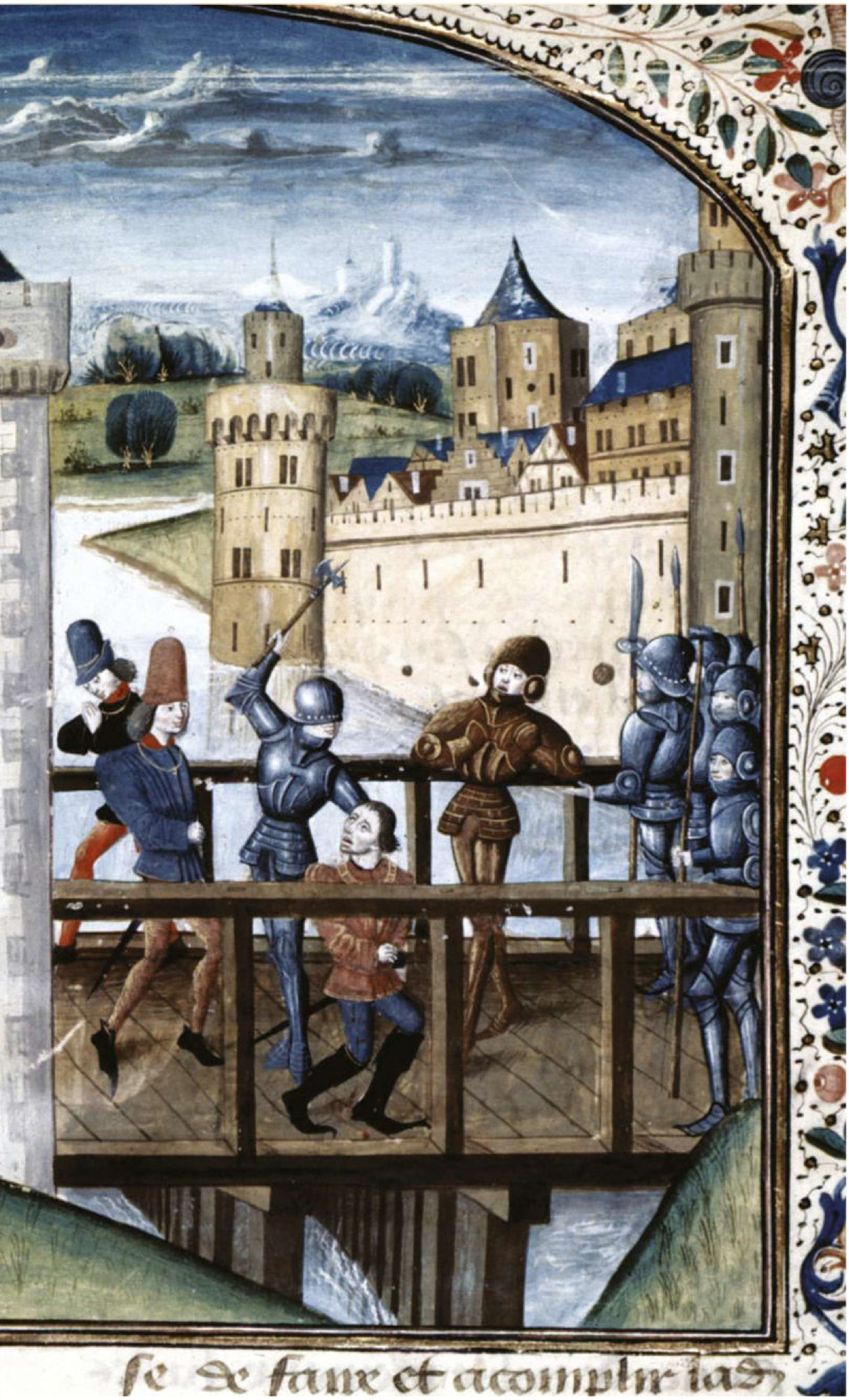


In one of the key incidents of the Hundred Years' War, John the Fearless is struck down with an axe on a bridge in Montereau, central France. The assassination solidified divisions within France, strengthening the hand of England's Henry V

GASTON LEROUX
Le Fantôme de l'Opéra

23 SEPTEMBER 1909

The French newspaper *Le Gaulois* carries **the first instalment of a new story** by Gaston Leroux, set two decades earlier in the sumptuous, haunted world of the Palais Garnier opera house. The story takes its title from its most famous character: ***The Phantom of the Opera***.



10 SEPTEMBER 1419

John the Fearless is lured into a fatal trap

The Burgundian leader is butchered during peace talks

In the early 15th century, France was not a happy place. Under Charles VI, who was experiencing bouts of psychosis, the bitter rivalry between two branches of the royal family, the Armagnacs and the Burgundians, had spilled over into war. In 1418 the Burgundian leader, John the Fearless, had captured Paris, though not before the teenage dauphin, another Charles, had managed to escape.

In the autumn of 1419, John and the young Charles decided to resolve their differences and form an alliance against English aggressors. They agreed to meet at the bridge over the Seine at Montereau on 10 September 1419 to seal the deal.

John was a bold, reckless man – hence his nickname. So when he heard rumours that Charles's men were planning something, he was not unduly discouraged. He arrived with plenty of bodyguards, as was only sensible. But it never occurred to him not to turn up at all.

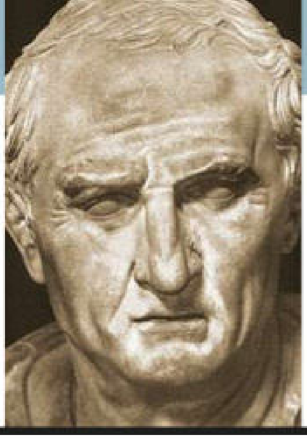
When John strode onto the bridge, he found that carpenters had built a special wooden enclosure, midway across, for the meeting. He and Charles were allowed to bring 10 men each, who would step through a gate into the space. Every man had to swear an oath that he would not raise his hands in anger.

The meeting began, the two sides glaring at one another with undisguised suspicion. As was expected, John knelt before the dauphin. But Charles barely looked at him. Something was wrong. John's hand went to his sword hilt. "You put your hand on your sword in the presence of His Highness the Dauphin?" one of Charles's men said. And at that moment, the first axe-blow came crashing down.

As John buckled under the impact of the attack, his men were almost too stunned to intervene. Meanwhile Charles's men were pouring through the gate, armed to the teeth, screaming "Kill! Kill!" More blows rained down. Blood poured from stab wounds in John's chest. He never stood a chance.

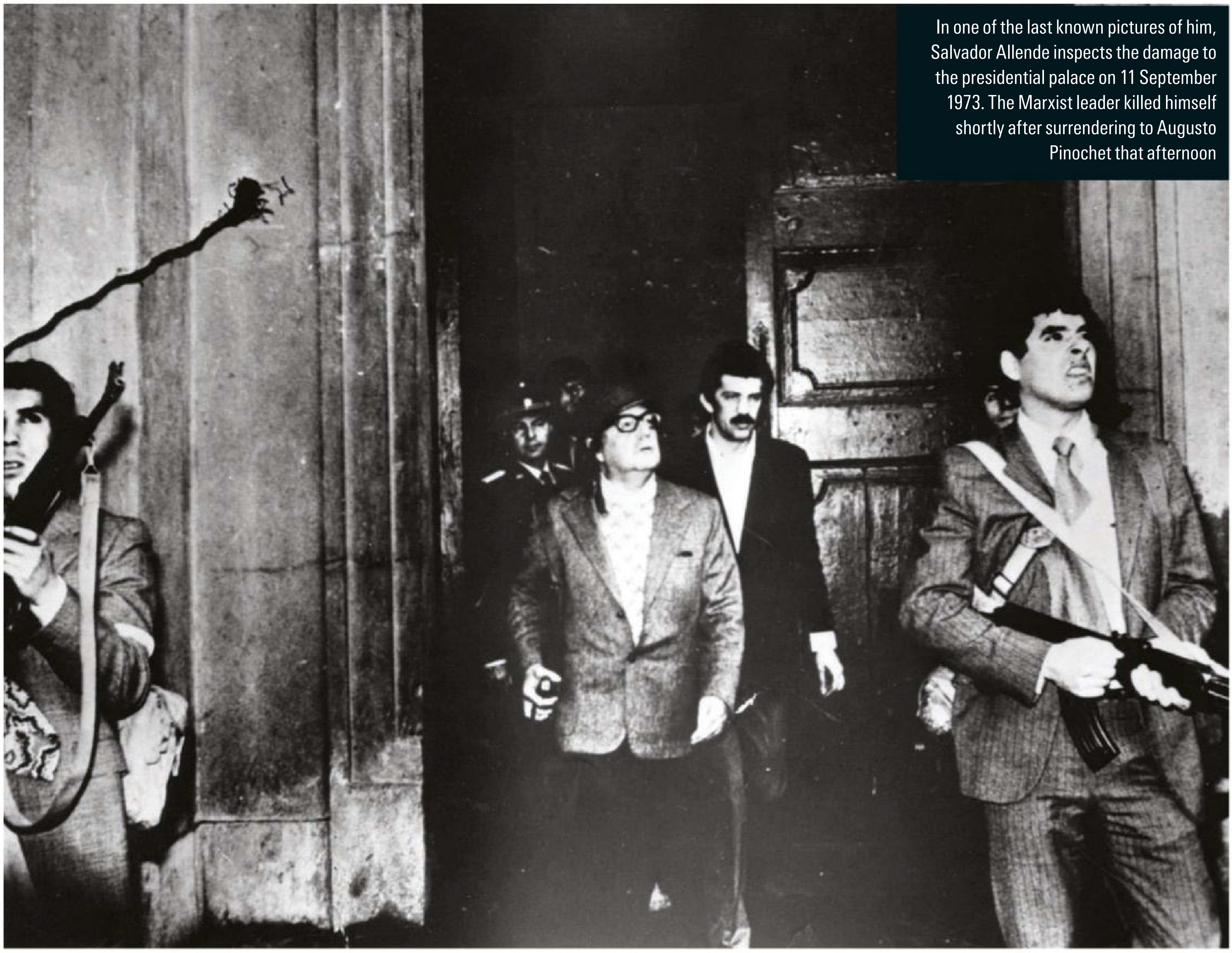
21 SEPTEMBER 1745

In **Prestonpans**, East Lothian, a government army comes up against Charles Edward Stuart's **Jacobite Highlanders**. The battle lasts less than half an hour, and the result is a disaster for the government, whose troops panic and flee from the Highlanders' charge.



2 SEPTEMBER 44 BC

Appalled at the rise of Mark Antony after Caesar's murder, **Roman statesman Cicero** (left) delivers the first in a series of speeches, known as the Philippics, attacking the new order. In revenge, Antony orders Cicero's head and hands to be cut off.



In one of the last known pictures of him, Salvador Allende inspects the damage to the presidential palace on 11 September 1973. The Marxist leader killed himself shortly after surrendering to Augusto Pinochet that afternoon

GETTY IMAGES

11 SEPTEMBER 1973

Pinochet oversees Allende's downfall

The regime of Chile's Marxist president comes crashing down

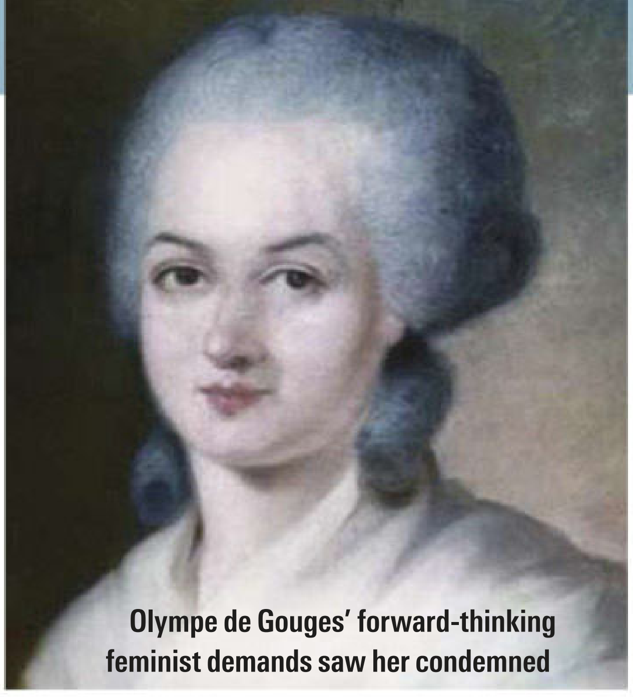
"Surely this will be the last opportunity for me to address you," said the thin, crackly voice on the radio. "The air force has bombed the antennas of Radio Portales and Radio Corporación... Given these facts, the only thing left for me is to say to the workers: I'm not going to resign! At this historic juncture, I will pay for the loyalty of the people with my life… Long live Chile! Long live the people! Long live the workers!"

So ran the last broadcast words of Chile's president, Salvador Allende, recorded as troops were blasting their way into his palace in the centre of its capital city, Santiago. The date was 11 September 1973, and after an extraordinarily turbulent three-year presidency, Allende's Marxist experiment was almost over.

With inflation at well over 100 per cent and the middle classes in virtual open revolt, the army's commander-in-chief, General Augusto Pinochet, had run out of patience. At dawn that morning, the navy seized the port of Valparaiso. Meanwhile, military units were streaming into central Santiago. By mid-morning, it was obvious even to Allende that the game was up. The military sent a message ordering him to resign, but he refused. He would rather die in the palace, he said defiantly. Very well, Pinochet said.

By 1.30pm, the palace walls were shaking under the impact of army fire. Although the defenders clung to their positions, Allende had had enough. Twenty minutes later, after ordering his guards to surrender, he went along the line, shaking hands in farewell. Then, carrying an AK-47 given him by his friend Fidel Castro, he went alone to a chamber on the second floor, steadied the rifle between his legs and shot himself.

Pinochet wasted little time. By nightfall, Chile was in the hands of the army. Tens of thousands of dissidents were imprisoned and murdered, many of them after being tortured in the national stadium. It was not until March 1990 that Pinochet finally stepped down.


Olympe de Gouges' forward-thinking feminist demands saw her condemned

5 SEPTEMBER 1791

Olympe de Gouges fights for women's rights

The feminist writer publishes a radical declaration

"Mothers, daughters, sisters, representatives of the Nation, all demand to be constituted into a national assembly," begins the preamble to the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*. "Man, are you capable of being fair? A woman is asking: at least you will allow her that right. Tell me? What gave you the sovereign right to oppress my sex? Your strength? Your talents?"

Written by the French feminist Olympe de Gouges, the *Declaration* has a good claim to being one of the most forward-looking documents ever written. Clever and radical, de Gouges made a name for herself in the 1780s as a passionate critic of slavery. But it was the outbreak of the French Revolution that handed her a historic opportunity.

Frustrated that the National Assembly's charter of human liberties, *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,* offered nothing to women, de Gouges decided to write a feminist version, which she dedicated to Marie Antoinette. She called for women to have full political rights, for equality within marriage and for women to be allowed to identify the fathers of their children, which meant single mothers could demand support.

Was France ready for this ground-breaking proposal? It was not. Most of her fellow revolutionaries ignored it. For the Jacobins, she was too brave, too outspoken and too independent. Two years later, after a swift mock trial, they sent her to the guillotine.

Dominic Sandbrook's latest book is *Who Dares Wins: Britain, 1979–1982* (Allen Lane, 2019)

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER…

The remarkable reign of Suleiman the Magnificent

BY **JERRY BROTTON**

Five hundred years ago, Sultan Suleiman I (reigned 1520–66) ascended to the throne. Although he was the longest-reigning and arguably greatest of all Ottoman sultans, his time on the throne began under the long shadow cast by his father, Selim 'the Grim'. On 30 September 1520, the 26-year-old Suleiman landed at Üsküdar on the Asian side of the Bosporus, having learned of the sudden death of his father just eight days earlier. Selim's death was kept secret as the Janissaries, his elite infantry and household troops, were notoriously volatile when it came to political succession. The next day Suleiman crossed the strait and headed to the Topkapı palace, where he met the political and religious leaders of the imperial *divan* (or council) who swore their allegiance to him. He then followed his father's funeral cortege through the streets of Istanbul, before returning to the Topkapı to complete his accession as the 10th Ottoman sultan.

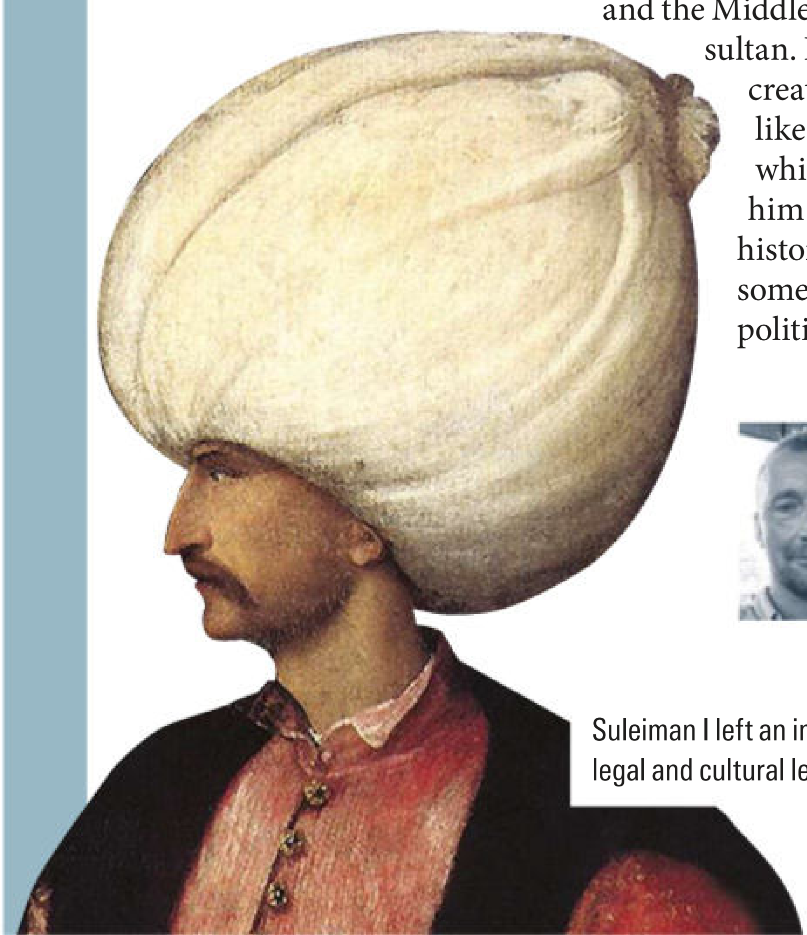
The Ottoman tradition of coronation was very different to its western counterparts. Its equivalent was *cülus* (from the Arabic 'to sit on the throne'), which involved largely private ceremonies within the Topkapı palace followed by a public march through the city. For Suleiman, this involved measuring himself against the brief but devastating legacy of his father's rule. In defeating the Safavids and Mamluks and controlling the holy cities of Mecca, Cairo and Jerusalem, Selim left his son as 'Inheritor of the Great Caliphate'.

> **"Suleiman extended the empire to its greatest ever reach, from Vienna to the Persian Gulf"**

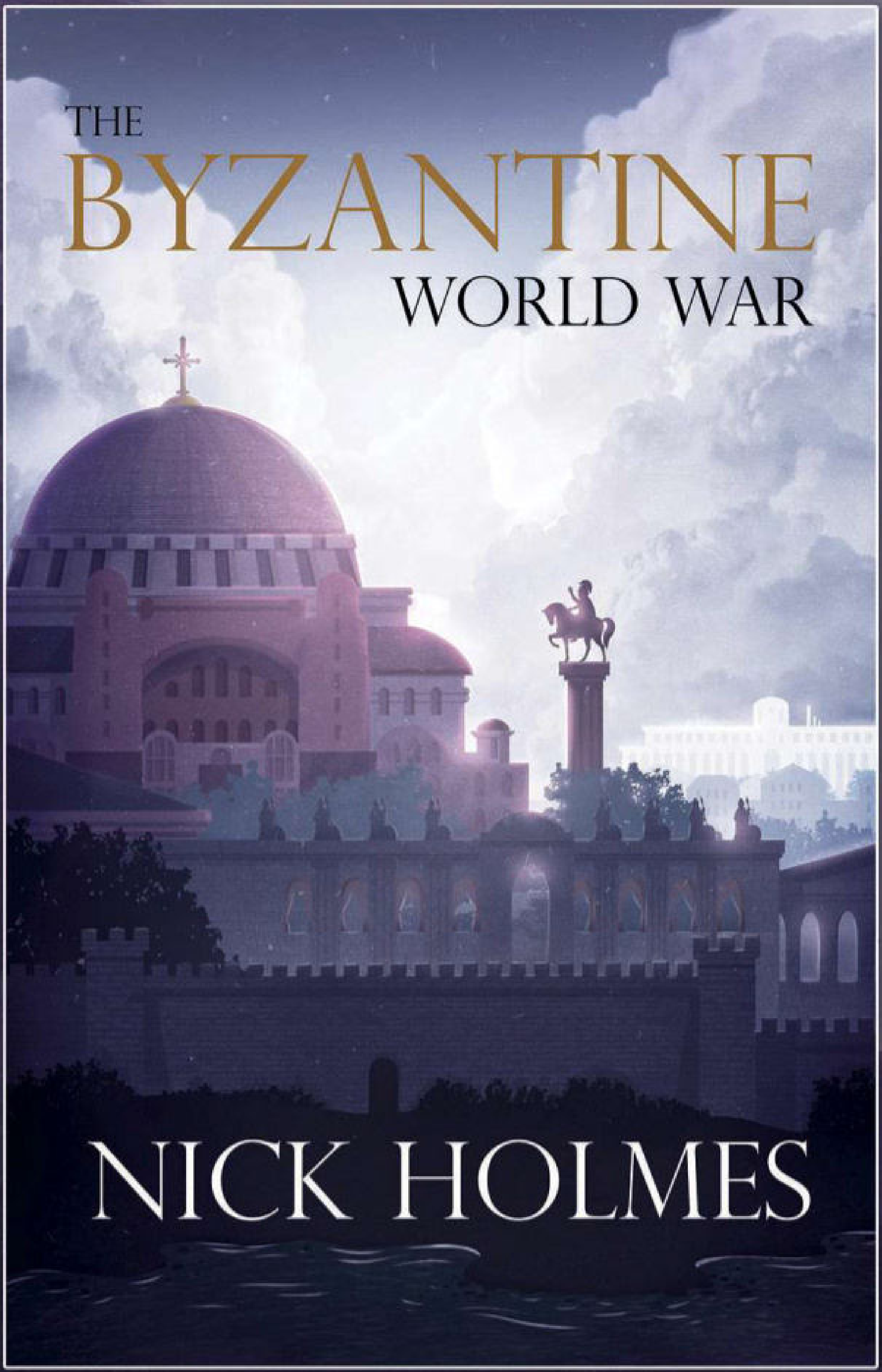
It seemed like an impossible legacy to emulate. Yet, during his 46-year reign, he extended the empire to its greatest ever reach, stretching from the gates of Vienna to the Persian Gulf – gaining him the European sobriquet 'the Magnificent' – while codifying and standardising legal processes across the empire, which is why Turks know him as 'the Lawgiver' (or *'Kânûnî*). Suleiman was a tireless military campaigner, responsible for pushing Ottoman forces deep into Europe, north Africa and the Indian Ocean. But he was also a gifted linguist who spoke five languages, and a patron of the arts, commissioning the architect Sinan to build much of the skyline that still dominates Istanbul, including his final resting place, the monumental Süleymaniye Mosque.

Suleiman left a greater legacy on the physical and religious landscape of Europe and the Middle East than any other Ottoman sultan. His European campaigns created a lasting mark on countries like Hungary and the Balkan states, while the mythical idealisation of him as the strong man of Ottoman history is now being appropriated by some of Turkey's more authoritarian political figures.

Jerry Brotton is author of *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (Penguin, 2016)


Suleiman I left an impressive architectural, legal and cultural legacy, says Jerry Brotton

THE CRUSADES SHOOK THE WORLD.
BUT WHY DID THEY HAPPEN?



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HIDDEN HISTORIES

DAVID OLUSOGA explores lesser-known stories from our past

"The British defeat left former slaves in the US in a terrifying predicament"

During the American Revolution, the British made an extraordinary promise. They issued proclamations informing all slaves whose owners had joined the rebellion that, if they came over to the British lines, they would be freed. Thousands did exactly that. Some of these so-called 'black loyalists' were formed into special regiments and fought against the rebels wearing sashes or badges that read 'liberty to slaves'.

But after the British defeat at the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, these former slaves were put in a terrifying predicament. Their legal owners were determined to reclaim their human property once the last of the British forces withdrew. In 1783, on the eve of their evacuation from the US, the British did something remarkable. They created a list of the 3,000 former slaves in the British-held city of New York, putting their names into a register known as the Book of Negroes. Among them was Harry Washington, who had served in the Black Pioneers and whose owner had sent agents into the city to look for the slaves that had escaped from his Mount Vernon Plantation. That slave owner was future president George Washington.

But George Washington and Harry Washington never met one another again. Harry was one of thousands who were evacuated from New York and sent to a settlement in Nova Scotia, then in British-held Canada. Other black loyalists ended up in London. Fortunate to have been freed from slavery and to have survived the war, they were nonetheless destitute. Left starving and freezing on the streets, the suffering of black people who had fought for Britain became a highly visible national scandal.

A committee of wealthy men emerged to offer relief to these 'black poor'. They arranged for the distribution of food and clothing – but a long-term solution was needed. That came from botanist and charlatan Henry Smeathman, who persuaded the committee, and then the government, to establish a new colony in which the black poor of London could build a free and prosperous settlement. However, the location that Smeathman recommended for this new settlement was the coast of Sierra Leone, a part of Africa to which he had previously led an expedition and which he knew was disease-ridden and dangerous. Smeathman's aim was not to save the black poor, but to make money for himself.

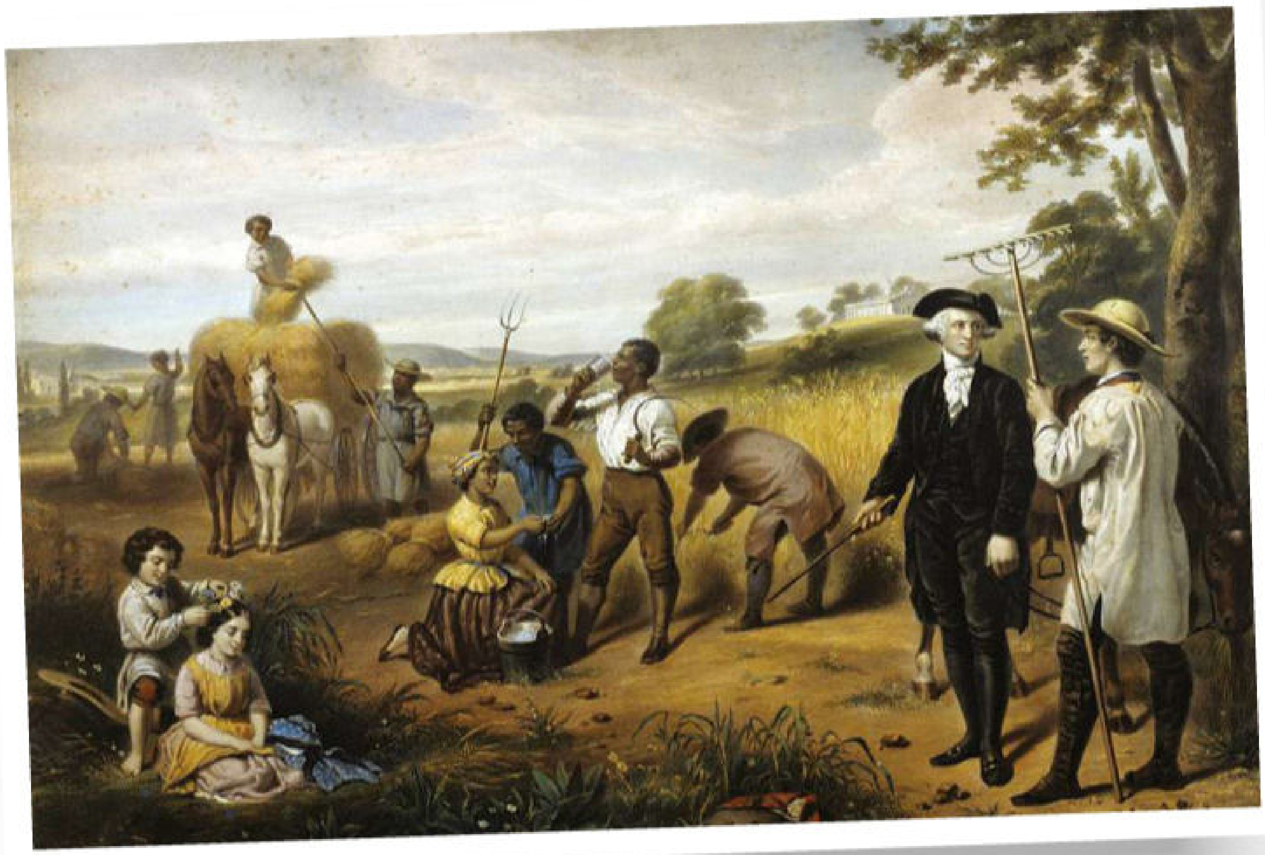
In 1787 three ships – the *Belisarius*, the *Atlantic* and the *Vernon* – set sail with 456 men, women and children on board. They landed at the mouth of the Sierra Leone river, and set about establishing a community based upon instructions issued by the British anti-slavery campaigner Granville Sharp.

This was an idealistic, almost utopian community with its own rules that were based, bizarrely, on Sharp's interpretation of 'Frankpledge' – an Anglo-Saxon social structure that had existed in England in the early Middle Ages. But the settlement had been sited on one of the major highways of the Atlantic slave trade, and, as the former slaves built their huts and tilled their fields, slave ships patrolled the waters around them.

Worse still, tropical diseases decimated their numbers, and tropical storms destroyed their crops. Yet this disaster did not prevent Sharp and his supporters in London from sending a second wave of colonists in 1792. This time, they were black settlers who had been sent from New York to Nova Scotia – and among those who now left for Sierra Leone was Harry Washington.

The new settlement was called Freetown. And, despite further deaths and further waves of disease, the settlers were able to build a bridgehead for what became the first British colony in Africa. **H**

David Olusoga is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. His series *Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners* is currently available on BBC iPlayer



Shifting landscapes
George Washington surveys enslaved plantation workers in this lithograph of an 1850s painting. The fate of one of his former slaves reveals much about the international world of the 18th century

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LETTERS

Musician Joan Armatrading is among the alumni of the Open University highlighted by reader Stacey Tyler

LETTER OF THE MONTH

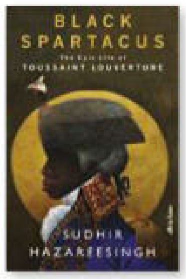
Airlifts and airdrops

Reader Joseph Nicholas is correct when he writes (*Letters*, August) that the main focus of the Allies' attempt to break the Soviet Union's blockade of West Berlin in 1948–49 was an airlift, with planes full of food and other essential materials landing regularly at Tempelhof airport. But it should not be forgotten, and I mention this in partial defence of your crossword setter, that there were also airdrops. One of the best known was Operation Little Vittles.

This was the brainchild of American pilot Gail Halvorsen who arranged to drop sweets, chocolate and chewing gum to the children of the city. He told the children that they would recognise his aircraft because he would "wiggle his wings" before parachuting the goodies down to them. Children gathered on a regular basis to wait for his airdrops, and he became known as the Candy Bomber and Uncle Wiggly Wings. Although his efforts were initially unauthorised by his superiors, he soon became a national hero, and American citizens flocked to donate to his cause.

Overall he airdropped over 23 tonnes of sweets to German children. Halvorsen will mark his 100th birthday later this year.

Ian MacDonald, Essex



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture** by Sudhir Hazareesingh. You can read our review of the book on page 76

Ex-pilot Gail Halvorsen in 2005. During the Soviet blockade he parachuted sweets to Berlin's children

In praise of distant learning

In regards to your *Talking Points* article in July's issue, I would argue that the 'value' of online education is just as great as an education gained from attending a traditional brick university.

I am a history student with the Open University, an organisation that has created so much potential and opportunities for thousands of students in Britain alone. With module content produced primarily online, supplemented by textbooks, the courses offered at institutions such as the OU create a wealth of possibility likely not obtainable for many without it.

The opposite of being "not the ideal", it creates immense opportunity in an ever-changing world. People of all walks of life are able to obtain solid, recognised qualifications that otherwise wouldn't have been achievable. With alumni including former president of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, and former president of the Women of the Year Lunches, Joan Armatrading, the OU offers a more diverse, inclusive student life that is tailored to each individual. I hope that the ongoing pandemic highlights the strengths of distant learning and allows distant learning students to finally be seen as having real qualifications in the eyes of brick university students.

Stacey Tyler, Worcester

Childcare challenges

I enjoyed Helen McCarthy's very comprehensive article, *Who's Holding the Baby?* (July), charting the difficulties that women have faced in balancing childcare and paid work during the past century. It made for relevant reading, given that, for many working mothers (and fathers), the suite of childcare options available in the 21st century has very abruptly disappeared during the coronavirus pandemic. As a mother of two who has spent the past three months balancing working from home with home-schooling, I felt a great affinity with those foremothers Helen McCarthy describes doing piecework with small children underfoot.

I had to smile when McCarthy wrote of the 1980s that "new technologies connecting home and workplace seemed to promise greater flexibility for mothers". Twenty-first century technology has been invaluable during this difficult period, keeping us connected both socially and professionally. However, it's not without its drawbacks, as any parent trying to conduct a video call with a child in the background can attest!

Thankfully, this current situation is a temporary one, and the childcare we're so used to will resume. Living through this lockdown period has certainly made me appreciate the advantages working women of my generation have, and the struggles encountered by those who went before me.

Sarah King, West Lothian

Radio times

I very much enjoyed the letter of the month, 'Island Stories', in your July issue and hope you might find the following of interest.

My late brother frequently visited a family in the Channel Islands in the early 1950s and they told him the following unusual story. A young German officer with whom they had become friendly was billeted with them during the war, and came in for his evening meal either at 7pm or 10pm. On one occasion he told them that he knew they had a radio in the house (forbidden, of course, by the occupying authorities) and, unless they got rid of it, they would all be in trouble. They did as he advised.

Soon after the end of the war, they visited him in Germany and asked how he knew about the radio. He replied that, if he had his meal with them at 7pm, their clock was always a little slow but, at 10pm, it was right. The family had been listening to the BBC's 9pm news bulletin and correcting the clock (as many of us did) by the chimes of Big Ben.

Maurice Graham, Croydon

Missing M*A*S*H

Having read Grace Huxford's interesting article *How We Forgot the Korean War* (July), I was surprised that her list of books and films that commemorate it did not include *M*A*S*H*, the 1968 novel, 1970 film, and very popular TV series that ran from 1972 to 1983 in America and 1973 to 1984 in the UK.

The novel, co-written by an army surgeon who had served in Korea, and the film, were black comedies, their stories linked by the thread that it was only comedic mayhem and

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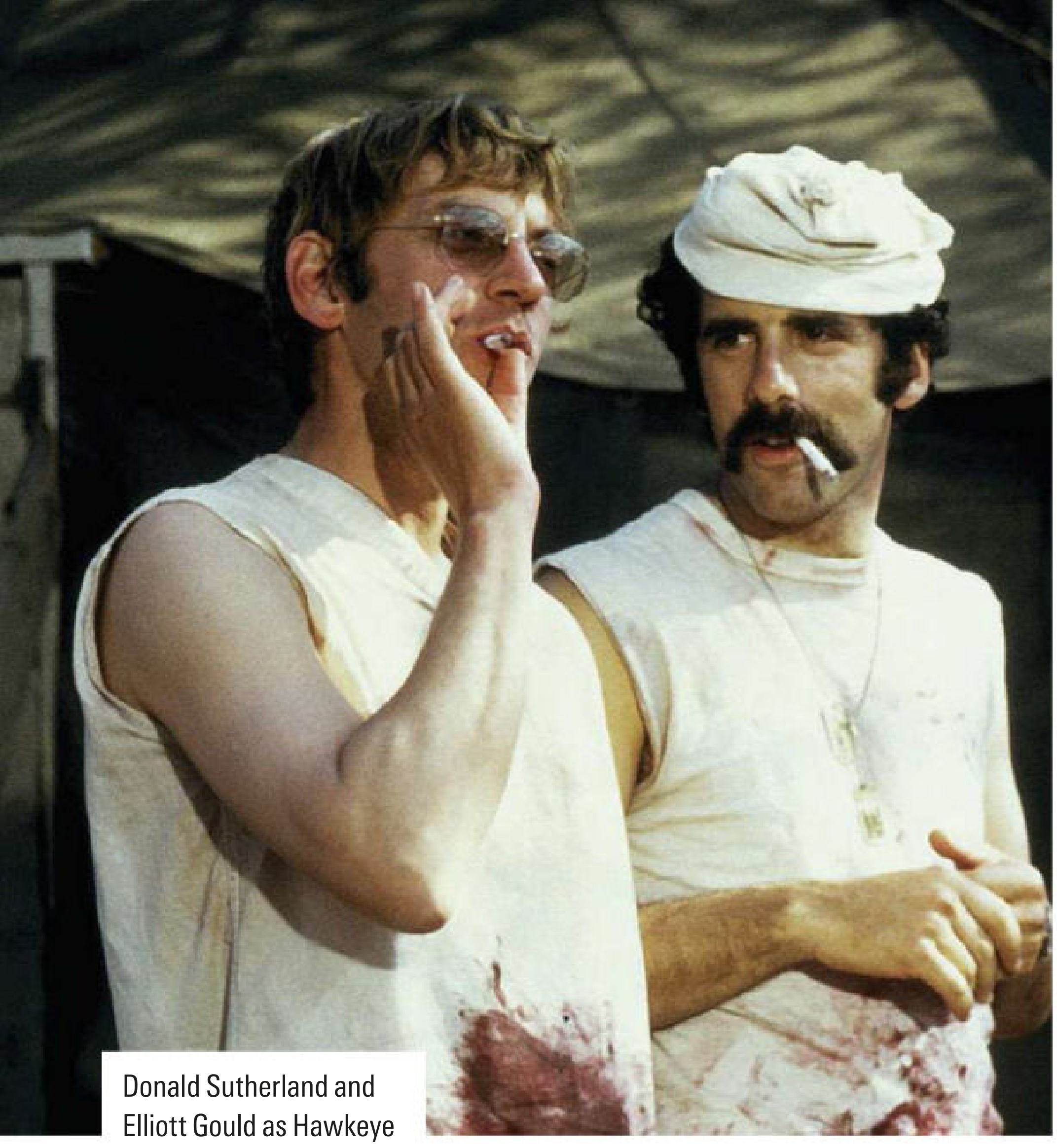
Who's holding the baby?



Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould as Hawkeye and Trapper John in a scene from the 1970 film *M*A*S*H*. Reader Peter Freshwater was surprised by its omission from a feature exploring Britain's relationship with the Korean War

other mischief that enabled conscripted medics, at odds with professional officers, to survive the horrors of their tours of duty. By its end, the TV series had devolved into a sitcom. However they've all certainly kept the memory of the war alive to this day.
Peter Freshwater, Edinburgh

Korea confusion

Grace Huxford's feature reminds me that, when I was posted to Korea in 1952, my mates asked, "Where is Korea?" As a stamp collector when a schoolboy, I remembered some stamps of Japan were overprinted 'Korea'. So I told them I thought it was like Wales or Scotland is to England – joined to Japan. I found out the hard way!
D McCarthy, Staffordshire

Britain's guilty secret?

I studied 18th-century British and European history for my JMB A-level History from 1961–63. We covered the growth of the British empire, William Pitt the Elder, mercantilism, and so on. I have no recollection of slavery being mentioned in textbooks, teaching or classroom discussion. Have I just forgotten – surely not! – or was the topic deliberately omitted from the syllabus like a guilty secret? What do other readers think?
Mike Dickson, Leeds

WRITE TO US

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Vol 21 No 9 – September 2020
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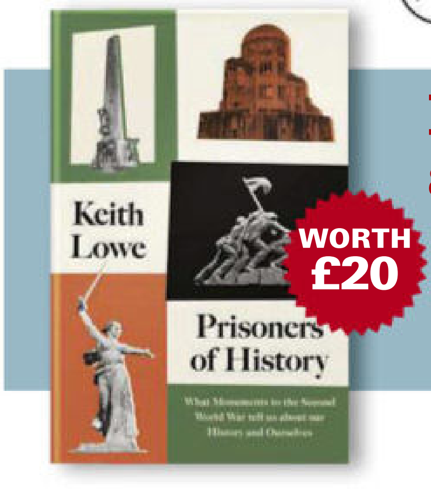

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Scientists Frederic Joliot-Curie and his wife, Irene, at work in their Paris laboratory in December 1932. The couple were among a wide-ranging group of scientists whose work paved the way for the atomic bomb

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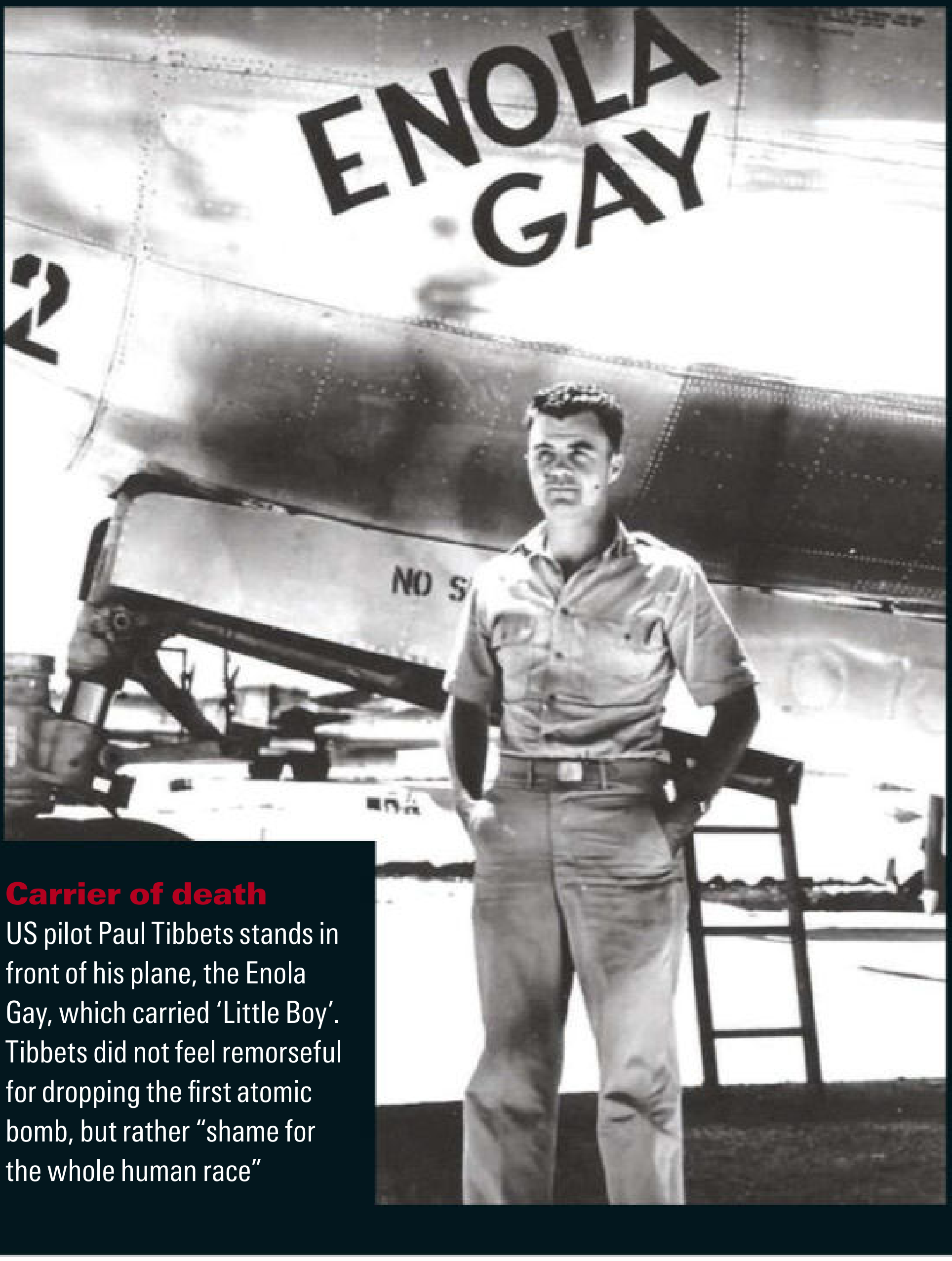
“I AM BECOME DEATH, THE DESTROYER OF WORLDS”

Seventy-five years ago, the crew of the Enola Gay dropped ‘Little Boy’ on Hiroshima. **Diana Preston** traces the leaps in scientific thought and twists of political circumstance that made the atomic bomb a terrifying reality

World of pain
Survivors of the atomic bombing lie in hospital beds in Hiroshima, suffering from the effects of radiation. As well as the 80,000 who died in the blast, 60,000 had succumbed to radiation sickness and related diseases by December 1945



Carrier of death
US pilot Paul Tibbets stands in front of his plane, the Enola Gay, which carried ‘Little Boy’. Tibbets did not feel remorseful for dropping the first atomic bomb, but rather “shame for the whole human race”

In Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 – the day of the Christian Feast of the Transfiguration – a young mother, Futaba Kitayama, looked up to see “an airplane as pretty as a silver treasure flying from east to west in the cloudless pure blue sky”. Someone standing by her remarked: “A parachute is falling.” Then the parachute exploded into “an indescribable light”. The American B-29 bomber Enola Gay had just dropped ‘Little Boy’, a four-tonne bomb which detonated with the power of 15,000 tonnes of TNT. Pilot Paul Tibbets, who had named his plane after his own mother, struggled to hold it steady as the first shock waves hit. Bathed in bright light, he looked back and saw “a giant purple mushroom boiling upward”. Over the intercom he announced to his shaken crew: “Fellows, you have just dropped the first atomic bomb in history.”

The destructive flash that seared Hiroshima into history was the culmination of 50 years of scientific creativity and innovation, and over 50 years of political and military turmoil. Generations of scientists had contributed to that moment. Yet, as they began uncovering the minute building blocks forming the world around them, few could have predicted how their compulsive curiosity would combine with political events to produce a devastating new weapon.

THE DESTRUCTIVE FLASH THAT SEARED HIROSHIMA INTO HISTORY WAS THE CULMINATION OF 50 YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC CREATIVITY AND POLITICAL TURMOIL

The journey began at the end of the 19th century, often called the chemists’ century (as opposed to the 20th, which physicists would dominate). The first step to the bomb arguably arrived in the mid-1890s, when Henri Becquerel found that uranium emitted energy rays. Subsequently, Marie Curie experimented with uranium as well as other elements. She discovered that thorium also emitted these enigmatic rays, which she later called ‘radioactivity’.

New Zealand physicist Ernest Rutherford found that uranium actually emitted two types of radiation – alpha and beta – and probably a third. He was correct about the latter; this third type would be called gamma.

In 1919, Rutherford made history again. He became the first person to chip a piece off an atomic nucleus, in the process identifying a sub-atomic particle – the positively charged proton (his mentor JJ Thomson had discovered electrons some years before). Rutherford already suspected the presence of another particle within the nucleus: the neutron. One of his former pupils, James Chadwick, discovered the sub-atomic particle at Cambridge University’s Cavendish Laboratory in 1932. The neutron contained no charge – hence its name – and, if used to bombard elements, it could penetrate atomic nuclei without being deflected. Thus, it was an ideal tool for the investigation of atoms.

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Fleeing persecution
After Albert Einstein left Nazi Germany, he stayed in the English home of Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson (pictured on horseback). He later moved to the US

Building momentum
Marie Curie with her husband, Pierre, in a Paris laboratory c1896. In 1898, the duo discovered two new radioactive elements: polonium and radium

The year 1932 was a scientific annus mirabilis. Also at the Cavendish, John Cockcroft and Ernest Walton built the first machine – using plasticine to seal its joints; the Cavendish did not encourage extravagance – to disintegrate an atomic nucleus with accelerated particles. Their device, dubbed a linear accelerator, provided the first experimental confirmation of Einstein's theory of $E = mc^2$ (energy is equal to mass times the speed of light squared), implying that enormous amounts of energy could be squeezed from a tiny mass.

A community torn apart

But in 1933 – the year when Rutherford dismissed the idea of harnessing energy from atoms as "moonshine", and when Hitler came to power – the scientists' world changed. Previously a small, close-knit community, they had met frequently at international conferences – disparagingly termed "witches' sabbaths" by Einstein – and published their results openly. Now, friendships and professional partnerships were sundered, as many were compelled to flee Nazi Germany and other countries gripped by totalitarian regimes because of their race or political views. Einstein crossed the Channel to England, protected by the British Naval Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson. However, finding England too formal (he preferred "No butlers. No evening dress"), he accepted a post at Princeton University.

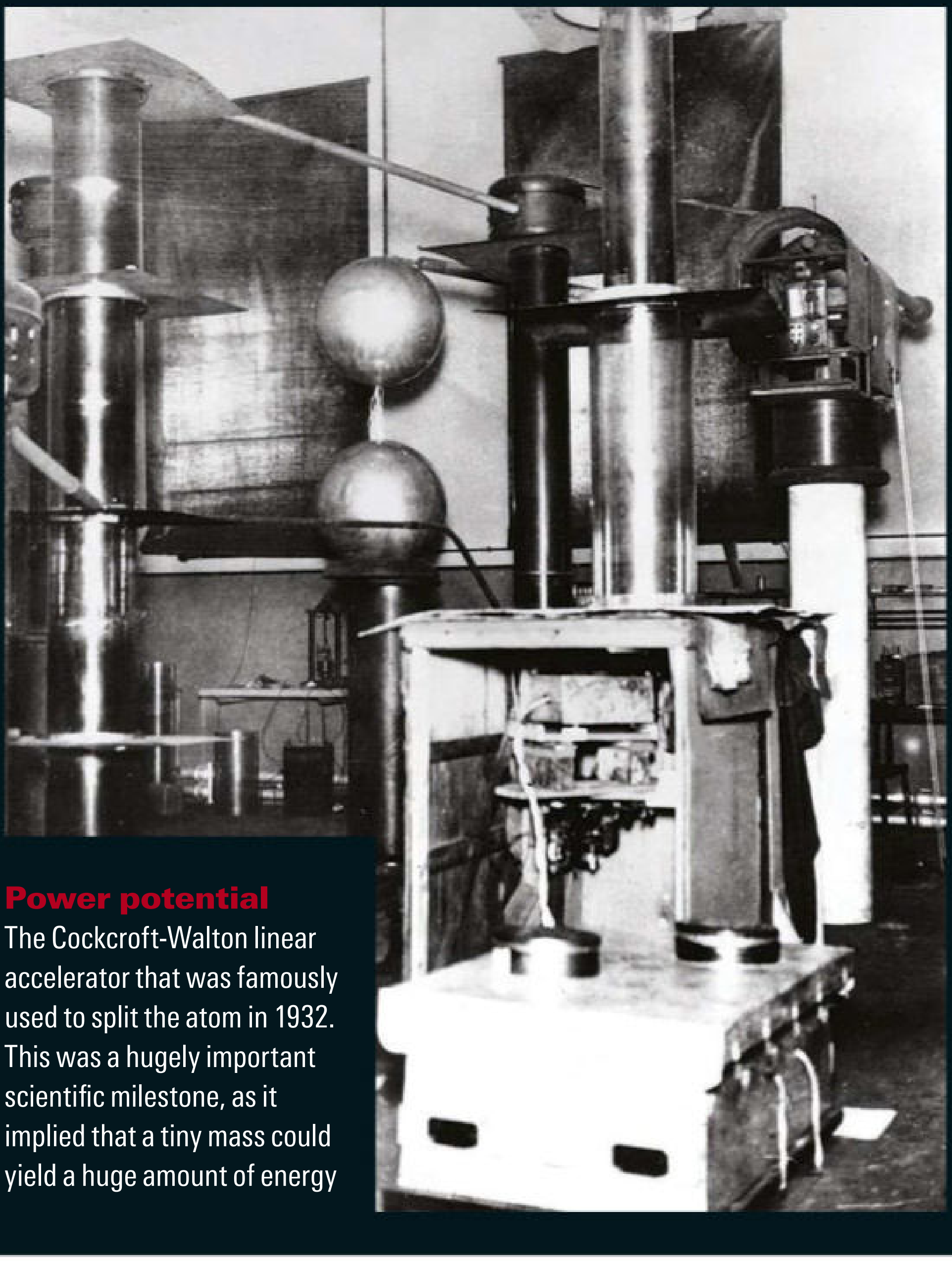
Against this increasingly tense backdrop, the final pieces of the atomic jigsaw were dropping into place. In France, Marie Curie's daughter, Irene, and her husband, Frederic Joliot-Curie, discovered how to force nuclei to disintegrate to form new, unstable elements that released radioactive energy as they decayed – so-called 'artificial radioactivity'. In Rome, physicist Enrico Fermi found that firing neutrons at a target substance through a filter of water – his assistants carried it in buckets from the goldfish pond in the garden behind his laboratory – dramatically slowed the neutrons' speed, enhancing their chances of hitting and penetrating the target nuclei.

However, in Mussolini's Italy, Fermi's Jewish wife was in danger. Awarded the Nobel prize, he used the ceremony in Stockholm as a pretext to leave Italy with his family and travel to the US. Like other scientists, Fermi had friends in Germany, two of whom – the chemist Otto Hahn and Vienna-born Jewish physicist, Lise Meitner – were renowned for their experimental work.

In 1938, with Hahn's help, Meitner fled to Sweden, where Hahn sent her results from experiments on uranium that he had conducted but could not interpret. During a cold, snowy walk with her nephew, physicist Otto Frisch, Meitner pondered the results and

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Pushing for peace
Dr Leo Szilard and his wife, Gertrud Weiss Szilard, receive news that he has won the 1959 Atoms for Peace Award. Along with Einstein, Szilard wrote a letter to Roosevelt warning him of the dangers of atomic weapons



Power potential
The Cockcroft-Walton linear accelerator that was famously used to split the atom in 1932. This was a hugely important scientific milestone, as it implied that a tiny mass could yield a huge amount of energy

realised that Hahn had succeeded in splitting the uranium nucleus, releasing energy. Back in Copenhagen, where he was working with Danish scientist Niels Bohr, Frisch asked American biologist William A Arnold what he called the process by which single cells divided. Arnold replied: "fission."

Soon after, while in the United States, Bohr announced the discovery of fission. However, his own studies showed that of the two isotopes present in uranium – U-238 and U-235 – only the much rarer U-235, constituting less than 0.7 per cent of natural uranium, actually fissioned. This reassured him that an atomic bomb was not viable, since it would take a gigantic effort to separate enough U-235 fuel from natural uranium; "you would need to turn the entire country into a factory," Bohr believed.

Exposing nature's secrets

Hungarian scientist Leo Szilard, now in the US, was less certain that an atomic bomb was impossible, and he lobbied fellow scientists to keep 'nature's secrets' secret. However, the Joliot-Curies were not swayed by Szilard's pleas, and in March 1939 they published a paper suggesting a chain reaction – a self-sustaining nuclear reaction triggered when a neutron induces a nucleus to fission, releasing energy and causing further fissions – in uranium may be possible. In August 1939, an alarmed Szilard persuaded Einstein to write to US president Franklin Roosevelt, alerting him to the dangers of nuclear weapons. One of his advisors convinced an initially sceptical Roosevelt to act, and the Uranium Committee was established.

"ALTHOUGH PERSONALLY I AM QUITE CONTENT WITH THE EXISTING EXPLOSIVES… WE MUST NOT STAND IN THE PATH OF IMPROVEMENT"

The outbreak of the Second World War meant many British physicists turned to war work, in particular radar. Excluded from classified projects, refugee scientists in Britain continued to ponder an atomic weapon. They included Otto Frisch, now in England, and German-born Rudolf Peierls. Hunched over a small gas fire at Birmingham University in the bitterly cold winter of 1940, they calculated the amount, or 'critical mass', of fissionable U-235 needed to release sufficient neutrons to spark a self-sustaining chain reaction to create an atomic bomb. The Joliot-Curies had estimated 40 tonnes. Peierls and Frisch calculated about one pound.

Scribbling on the back of an envelope, they calculated the energy released as equivalent to thousands of tonnes of ordinary explosive. Peierls recalled: "We were quite staggered… an atomic bomb was possible, after all, at least in principle!" They composed the Frisch-Peierls memorandum, a compelling three-page document which they presented to the British government in March 1940. It dealt with scientific, strategic and ethical issues, suggesting that the very high likely number

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Sparks of change
A female welder works in a K-25 uranium enrichment plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The facility's workers were mostly women, as many men were away fighting in the war

of civilian casualties "may make it unsuitable as a weapon for use by this country". But, as Germany might have been working on a bomb, they suggested Britain could develop one as a deterrent, "even if it is not intended to use the bomb as a means of attack".

The high-powered Maud Committee reviewed the memorandum, and in summer 1941 they recommended that Britain should institute an atomic bomb project. Churchill agreed: "Although personally I am quite content with the existing explosives… we must not stand in the path of improvement." British scientists sent copies of the report to colleagues in the still-neutral US, which they used to convince Roosevelt to increase fission research. After Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war, that relatively modest work expanded into the vast scientific and engineering effort codenamed the 'Manhattan Project', which cost $2bn, ballooned to the size of the US car industry and employed 130,000 people.

Under the overall supervision of General Leslie Groves, the project's scientific core, led by physicist Robert Oppenheimer, was based at Los Alamos in New Mexico, where a small British team under James Chadwick joined it. On 2 December 1942, in a nuclear pile (reactor) under the west stands of Chicago University's disused football stadium, Enrico Fermi achieved the world's first self-sustaining chain reaction. This convinced Roosevelt to fund industrial-scale plants to produce U-235 and also plutonium – an alternative fissionable element created at Berkeley.

K 6
J. R. Oppenheimer

Father of the bomb
The ID card for JR Oppenheimer, one of the lead scientists on the Manhattan Project

ALAMY

Nazi Germany had surrendered before the Manhattan Project team felt confident they were ready. The world's first nuclear explosion – the Trinity test – took place on the morning of 16 July 1945 in the New Mexico desert, producing the equivalent of 20,000 tonnes of TNT. The brilliant blinding flash "told us… we had done our job", Peierls recalled. As for Oppenheimer, he remembered that a line from the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita* raced through his brain: "I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."

Locking onto the target

The target now was Japan, where the military estimated the atomic bomb might save a million young American lives that would otherwise be lost in invading the Japanese home islands. A target committee, with British as well as American members, identified the key criterion for deciding where the bomb should fall: "Obtaining the greatest psychological effect against Japan". They whittled suitable targets down to three: Hiroshima, Kyoto and Niigata. When US secretary of war Henry Stimson removed Kyoto because of its cultural significance, Nagasaki replaced it.

Boiling clouds The atomic bombing of Nagasaki on 9 August 1945. This second attack came just three days after Hiroshima was bombed, and it also caused widespread death and destruction

War is over
Japanese signatories arrive at the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay for the surrender ceremonies

Waiting with his crew on the Pacific island of Tinian, Paul Tibbets learned Hiroshima was his primary target, unless cloud cover was too thick. The final decision would depend on reports from weather planes flying ahead of him. At 2.45am, 6 August 1945, Tibbets opened the throttles, and the heavily laden Enola Gay accelerated slowly down the chopped coral runway. Little more than 100 feet from its end, he eased the B-29 safely and steadily into the northern sky.

Just over five hours later, a weather plane assigned to Hiroshima radioed that cloud cover was relatively light. Tibbets told his crew: "It's Hiroshima." At 8.15am Hiroshima time, they were over the city, the Enola Gay's bomb doors opened and, Tibbets later wrote, "out tumbled 'Little Boy'". It exploded with a temperature of 1 million degrees centigrade at its heart, generating a white-hot fireball. Seeing the boiling clouds, his co-pilot Robert Lewis scribbled on his notepad: "My God, what have we done?" Futaba Kitayama, who had watched it fall, ran for her life. She recalled that in the river, "corpses were floating like dead dogs… their shreds of clothing dangling like rags". She also recounted: "I saw a woman floating face up, her chest gouged out, and gushing blood. Could such terrifying sights be of this world?" On the banks, school children writhed, "crazed, crying, 'mother, mother'".

As the fires grew in intensity, heavy rain began to fall. At first it came down in large, sticky black drops – "black rain" – as water intermingled with soot, dust and debris flung into the air by the explosion and radioactive material. Traumatised people instinctively opened their mouths to cool their parched throats. At his clinic two and a half miles from the epicentre, army doctor Hiroshi Sawachika struggled to cope as badly burned people arrived. "They held their hands aloft. They looked like they were ghosts," he said. A heavily pregnant woman begged, "Please help my baby live," but he could do nothing.

Ruined city
The devastated Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall in 1945. The building has been left untouched as a memorial

A fractured nation

Japan surrendered on 14 August 1945, five days after a second bomb – the plutonium-fuelled 'Fat Man' – devastated Nagasaki. Exact casualty figures are hard to calculate. In Hiroshima, the authorities estimated the number of deaths by December 1945 to be around 140,000; there were approximately 350,000 people in the city when the bomb fell. Since then, deaths from radiation-related diseases have added to the toll.

Although Hiroshima is again a vibrant city with a population more than treble what it was in August 1945, it still remembers. The former Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, close to the epicentre of the blast, has – apart from work to stabilise it – been left untouched, a shattered icon. Every day at 8.15am, a bell by the dome rings out, and for a moment passers-by pause and reflect. However, not all Hiroshima survivors

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Agonising smiles Two 'Hiroshima maidens' receive a visitor at New York's Mount Sinai hospital, where they are receiving plastic surgery. Like many of the survivors, they were badly disfigured

GETTY IMAGES

MANY ATOMIC SCIENTISTS AGONISED AT THE TIME AND LATER ABOUT THE MORALITY OF DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR WEAPON

are comfortable with how they are perceived. One commented: "I don't like this special view of us. I'd like to stand up as an individual."

The dropping of the atomic bomb cast a shadow over the lives of some of the Enola Gay's crew. Tibbets, the plane's pilot, repeatedly stated that he felt no personal guilt for doing what he saw as his military duty. However, he wrote in his memoirs: "I feel a sense of shame for the whole human race, which through all history has accepted the shedding of human blood as a means of settling disputes between nations."

His co-pilot, Lewis, raised money for medical treatment for the so-called 'Hiroshima maidens' – young girls disfigured by the blast. In 1971, he auctioned his log of the Enola Gay's flight and used part of the proceeds to buy marble from which he sculpted statues with religious themes. They included 'God's Wind', a mushroom-shaped statue that symbolically leaked blood.

For their part, many atomic scientists agonised at the time and later about the morality of a nuclear weapon. Oppenheimer returned to academic life and refused to support US plans to build an even more powerful nuclear weapon: the world's first hydrogen bomb. A variety of opponents, including fellow Manhattan scientist Edward Teller – devoted to what he called the "sweet technology" of the hydrogen bomb – used this, as well as Oppenheimer's leftwing sympathies, to attack him during the anti-communist McCarthy era.

Meanwhile, Joseph Rotblat – the only scientist to walk out of the Manhattan Project on conscience grounds – returned to England, his adopted homeland, and campaigned against nuclear proliferation. Working with other leading scholars, he founded the Pugwash Conferences: a means of bringing academics and public figures together to find peaceful solutions to global security threats. In 1995, he received the Nobel prize.

Of course, many more scientists who had been involved in the race to build the atomic bomb grappled with the moral implications of their ruinous creation. Perhaps the last word should fall to Einstein, who famously regretted the role he played in the development of nuclear weapons. He said: "Had I known that the Germans would not succeed in producing an atomic bomb… I would have never lifted a finger."

Diana Preston is the author of *Before the Fallout: From Marie Curie to Hiroshima* (Corgi, 2006). Her most recent book, out in paperback, is *Eight Days at Yalta* (Picador, 2020)

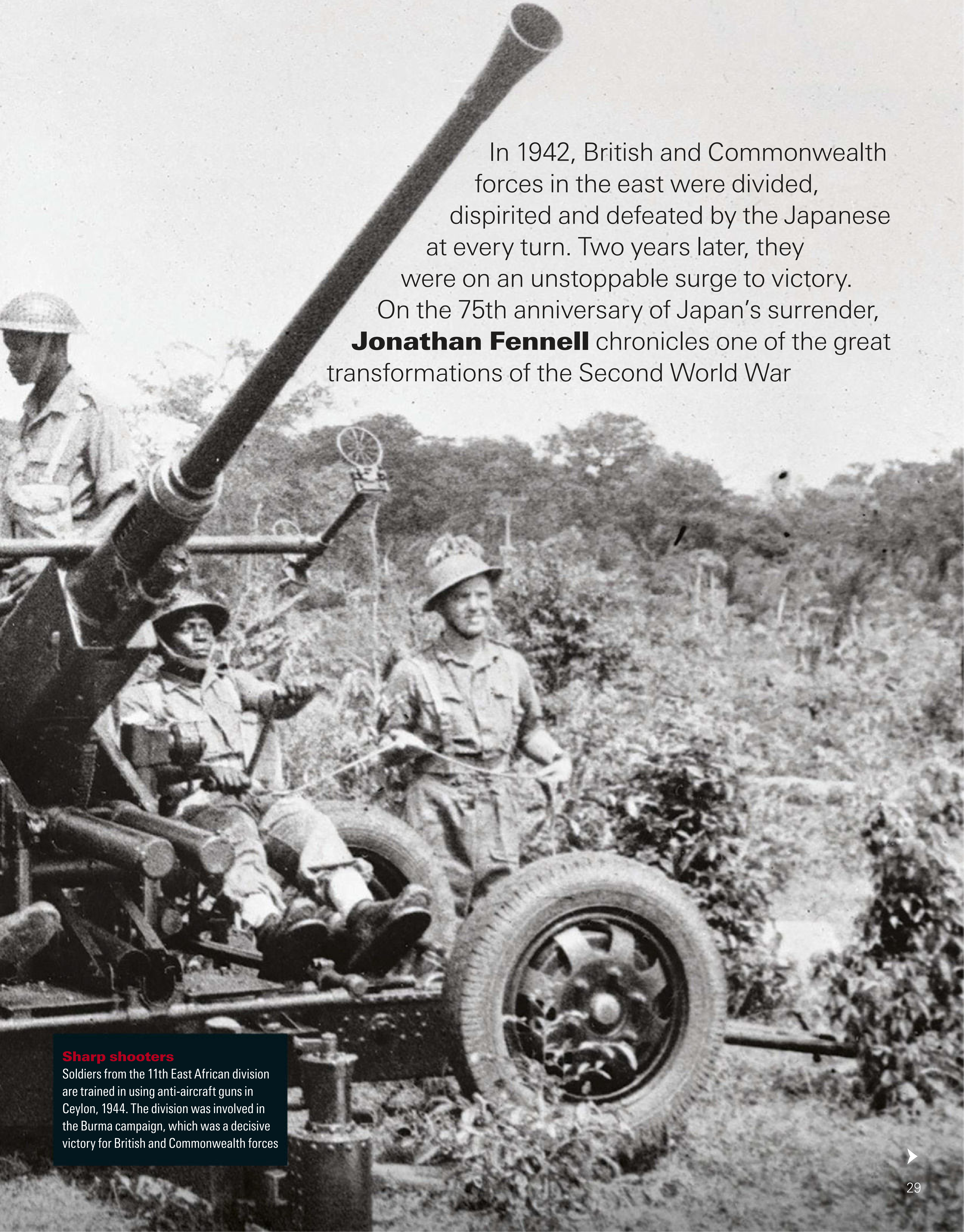
LISTEN

The two-part BBC World Service radio series and seven-part podcast **The Bomb** is airing now. Catch-up with episodes on BBC Sounds

FROM "LASTING DISGRACE" TO ALL-CONQUERING HEROES

IWM_SE224

In 1942, British and Commonwealth forces in the east were divided, dispirited and defeated by the Japanese at every turn. Two years later, they were on an unstoppable surge to victory. On the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender, **Jonathan Fennell** chronicles one of the great transformations of the Second World War



Sharp shooters
Soldiers from the 11th East African division are trained in using anti-aircraft guns in Ceylon, 1944. The division was involved in the Burma campaign, which was a decisive victory for British and Commonwealth forces

On 6 August 1945, a US plane dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima; three days later, a second bomb was released over Nagasaki. With Soviet tanks rolling across the border of Japanese-controlled Manchuria (in northern China), it was clear to Japan's emperor, Hirohito, that his country now faced the prospect of total annihilation. Japan surrendered on 15 August; the Second World War, the most destructive conflict in human history, was over.

For the British and Commonwealth troops strung out across the Asian subcontinent, the sudden end of hostilities evoked a mix of complex emotions. With Burma having been reconquered in May, some were preparing for new campaigns to retake Britain's lost colonies to the south and east. Some were involved in reconstruction and repair operations, while others awaited leave, or even repatriation.

The west African troops in Allied Land Forces South East Asia (whose main subordinate formation was the famous 14th Army) greeted the news with joy. According to the quarterly morale reports compiled in theatre, they were so enthused that spirits continued to be "very high" well into September. And Indian troops, who had been at the forefront of the final great campaign in Burma against the Japanese, responded to the news "enthusiastically". But positive sentiments about the prospects of a return to civilian life soon turned to anxiety, as soldiers reflected on the possibility of unemployment.

For British soldiers, who by the fall of Rangoon (the Burmese capital) made up only 13 per cent of the 14th Army, the announcement was met "first with reserve and then with great satisfaction". This was a more positive response than that elicited by the news of victory in Europe in May, which had been "received without enthusiasm". But "news of strikes and shortages at home" soon began to "provoke bitter and impatient comment". The sudden cessation of the American Lend Lease programme, the materiel lifeline that had sustained Britain during the long and arduous conflict, caused some "ill-feeling towards America". Britain was now faced with a new "Dunkirk", one of a financial character; its only option would be to ask the Americans for an immediate loan.

THE POOR, DESTITUTE AND NEEDY JOINED THE INDIAN ARMY; IT WAS A FORCE OF ECONOMIC CONSCRIPTS

Disenchantment in the ranks

Among the Askari of the 11th East African Division, "the news of Japan's defeat produced a general feeling of relief but also an impatience with the rigours of military life and discipline". VE Day had been celebrated in a "hearty manner", on the understanding that it meant more troops for Asia and a speedier return to Africa. By August, however, the soldiers' letters betrayed "war weariness" and a general "disinclination to engage in another campaign". As the British morale report put it, in a comment that could easily apply to the whole of the 14th Army, "relief at the news of victory soon gave way to an almost overwhelming desire to go home".

It is a little disconcerting, perhaps, given the foundational status of the Second World War in British culture, to read of disenchantment at the end of the conflict. But, in many ways, these comments point to one of the key characteristics of the British and Commonwealth war effort: the war was fought by citizen armies, citizen navies and citizen air forces. The war was won by individuals for whom the conflict had always been more centred on personal and local issues than strategic concerns. Home would always trump geopolitics.

In this sense, the story of the British and Commonwealth forces in south-east Asia was about more than just battles. It was also about hearts and minds, hopes and fears. Generals and politicians had to make the grand ideological and geo-strategic underpinnings of the war make sense for the 'poor bloody infantry'. When they managed to do so, the British and Commonwealth Armies fought with determination. When they failed, defeat and disaster often ensued.

In Britain, the war had begun with political disunity – with the same being true of many countries in the British empire. It was only with Winston Churchill's accession to power in May 1940 and the formation of a new, broader coalition government, which included Labour, that a semblance of political accord was achieved in the United Kingdom.

In India, the commencement of international hostilities sparked nothing short of a major political crisis. The Indian National Congress insisted that support for the war could only be given if the London government renounced imperialism and promised independence. When the viceroy, Lord

PICTURE CONSULTANT: EVERETT SHARP/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

TIMELINE How fortunes were reversed in the east

8 December 1941

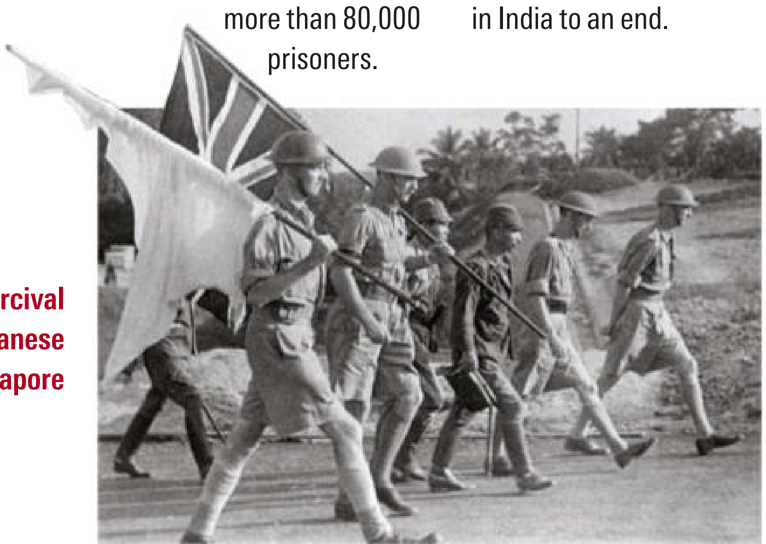
The Japanese landings in Malaya commence, leading to the 25th Army's assault on the British 'fortress' of Singapore.

20 January 1942

The Japanese 15th Army pours across the jungle-covered mountainous border between British-held Burma and Siam (modern-day Thailand), thus **beginning the campaign in Burma**.

15 February 1942

Singapore surrenders to the assaulting Japanese forces. The lynchpin of British power in the far east falls, with a loss of more than 80,000 prisoners.



Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival (far right) marches to the Japanese camp to surrender Singapore

8 August 1942

Congress passes the 'Quit India' resolution, sanctioning a mass struggle on non-violent lines to bring British rule in India to an end.

1943

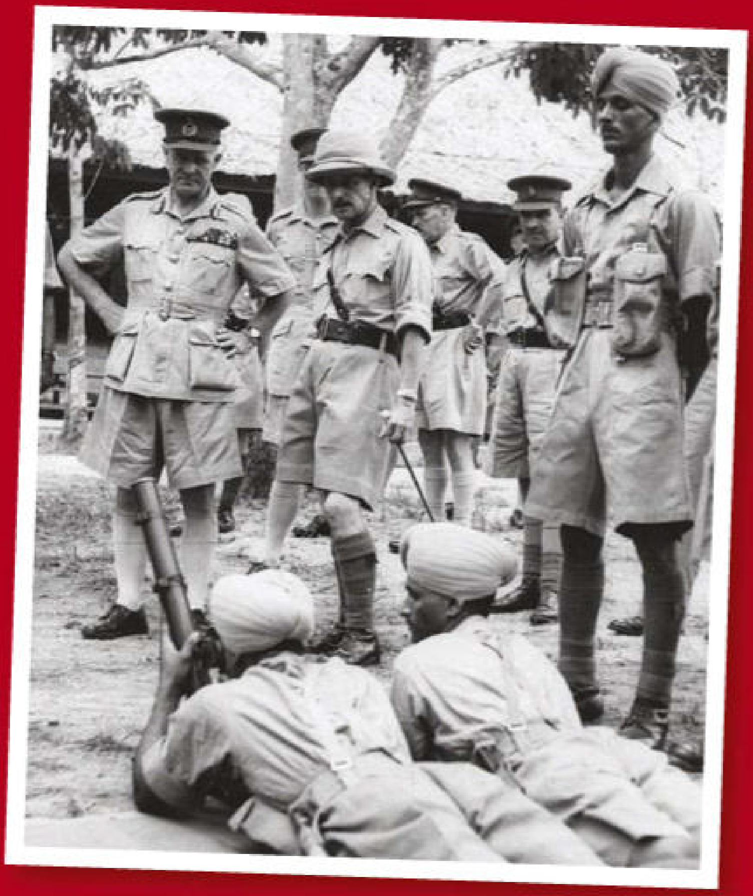
The Bengal famine kills up to 4 million. It was perhaps fortunate for the Indian Army that, as the morale reports put it, "very few soldiers" were "recruited from famine areas".

In Calcutta, an impoverished mother sits by her child during the Bengal famine

May 1943

The Infantry Committee, India, is convened to examine the problems facing the Indian Army in the far east and to provide recommendations.

Japanese troops fly their flag over Singapore following Britain's surrender. The loss was a devastating defeat for Britain, as it forfeited a key segment of its far east empire



Archibald Percival Wavell visits a Dogra (Indian infantry) regiment in 1942 and inspects a trench mortar section. Senior officers were deeply concerned by the morale of some units

Linlithgow, offered no more than a meagre postwar review of the 1935 constitution, which had offered political reforms to India but crucially did not award it dominion status, the Congress ministries followed the Congress High Command's instructions and resigned as a body.

The difficulty of uniting people, so evident among political elites (especially in India), was matched also by citizens' attitudes to mobilisation. The weight of available evidence points to a far less fervent and less deferential population than that which mythically went 'willingly' to war in 1914. Conscription was introduced in the United Kingdom, except Northern Ireland, from the outset of the war. But, in the highly charged political climate of the subcontinent, conscription was simply out of the question. The Indian Army would have to be expanded by volunteerism alone.

At face value, the Raj was extremely successful in this endeavour: the Indian army of 2.25 million was to become the largest volunteer army in history. However, it represented only about 3 per cent of the entire adult male population of the region in this period; by comparison, 45 per cent of the eligible male population in Britain served in the armed forces. In the main, it was the poor, the destitute and the needy (those who had little other option) who joined up. The Indian army was a force of economic conscripts; it was a volunteer army in name only.

Slumping morale

All this mattered, because soldiers' morale was dependent, to an extent far greater than expected, on social factors and a desire for change. The war, at this stage, was not viewed as a crusade, but as a bad business that would have to be endured while it lasted. In the absence of concrete promises for socio-political change in Britain and India, many men wondered what they were fighting for. A struggle fought to maintain the status quo aroused little enthusiasm among the troops.

As a consequence, morale and fighting effectiveness suffered. Defeat followed defeat, from the first Japanese attack on Malaya, on 8 December 1941, to the final desperate retreat from Burma, in May 1942. Commanders and politicians despaired at the performance of the troops. This sentiment was reflected in Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival's warning, issued on 11 February 1942, before the climactic – and catastrophic – conclusion of the battle for Singapore: "In

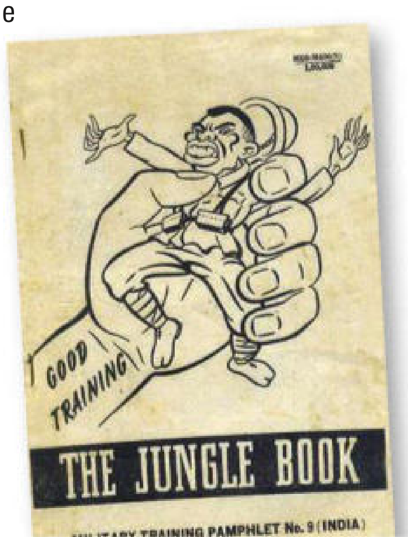
ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/TOPFOTO

June 1943

Indian officers are granted **powers of punishment over British army** personnel, a key milestone in the cultural transformation of the Indian Army.

September 1943

Publication of the 'Jungle Book', which becomes the tactical 'bible' of the Indian Army in Burma.



GOOD TRAINING

THE JUNGLE BOOK

MILITARY TRAINING PAMPHLET No. 9 (INDIA)

A copy of the 'Jungle Book', which laid out a singular approach towards jungle warfare

March to June 1944

At the battles of Imphal (in Manipur, India) and Kohima (in Nagaland, India), the **Japanese lose an estimated 50,000 soldiers**, making it the worst defeat in Japan's military history.

November 1944 to May 1945

In operations 'Capital' (an overland push to retake Burma) and 'Extended Capital' (an offensive that cut off the main Japanese escape route out of Burma), **the 14th Army destroys a larger Japanese force** than was ever encountered by the Americans in the Pacific.

6 August 1945

The American B-29 bomber **the Enola Gay drops an atomic bomb** on Hiroshima, immediately killing around 80,000 people.

15 August 1945

Japan surrenders to Allied forces. The war in Asia is over.

SECOND EXTRA NORFOLK LEDGER-DISPATCH SECOND EXTRA

WAR OVER

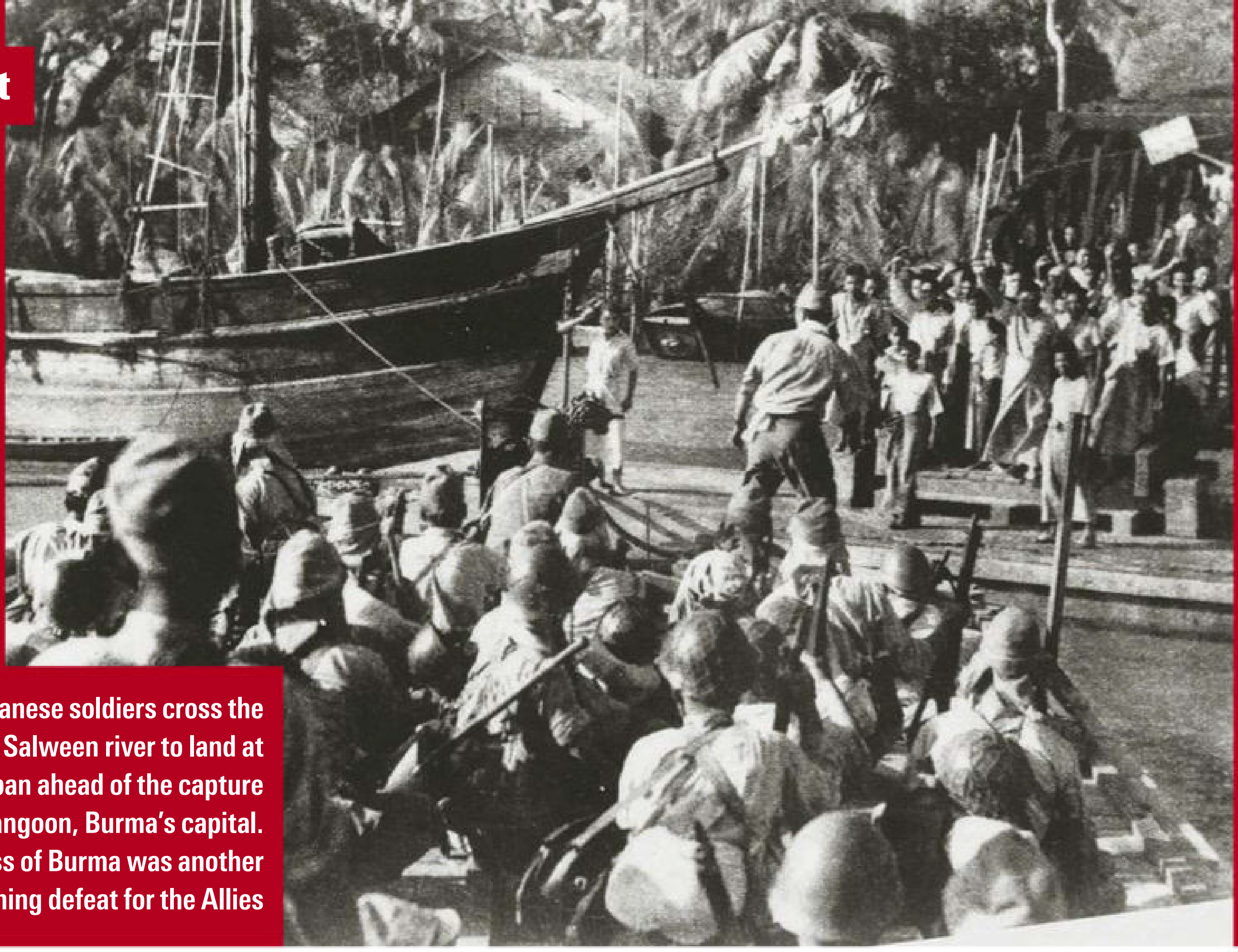
Japan Surrenders Unconditionally

Army To Cut 5,000,000 Within Year

MacArthur To Accept Capitulation

Indianapolis Lost, All Hands Casualties

Women shout out slogans during the 'Quit India' protests. This movement showed that India had not embraced total war, argues Jonathan Fennell



Japanese soldiers cross the Salween river to land at Martaban ahead of the capture of Rangoon, Burma's capital. The loss of Burma was another crushing defeat for the Allies

some units the troops have not shown the fighting spirit which is to be expected of men of the British empire. It will be a lasting disgrace if we are defeated by an army of clever gangsters, many times inferior in numbers to our own. The spirit of aggression and determination to stick it out must be inculcated in all ranks. There must be no further thought of withdrawal without orders."

Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Stewart, the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, despaired that one of the key factors limiting the performance of the British and Commonwealth armies was ideology. "The cultivation of ideals for which we fight so as to make them real and alive to individuals" had, in his view, simply not been "practised" by politicians and commanders in Malaya. This, he said, should have been one of the "first duties" of military and national leaders in a time of emergency. The consequences of these oversights were immense. Losing only 5,500 men, outnumbered Japanese forces had seized the greater part of Britain's empire in the far east.

It is of lasting credit to those who fought that this dire situation was turned around, and, as General Sir William Slim, the Commander of 14th Army, put it, defeat turned into victory. The dynamics of morale, training and doctrine were central to this story.

An uncertain future

First up, the issue of morale had to be addressed. The failure of the Cripps mission, in March 1942, to find a new constitutional settlement for India, and the violence sparked by a new revolutionary movement, 'Quit India', that August, demonstrated the extent to which the British government in India had failed to fully mobilise the people for total war. It was clear from morale reports that "one of the chief anxieties" among soldiers was the "feeling of uncertainty as to what will happen… when the war is over". The situation was little better for British soldiers. After a visit to the far east in April 1943, Sir Ronald Adam, the Adjutant General of the British Army, reported that the average British soldier felt that he "was fighting for a country that did not want us".

The solution Adam proposed was Army Education. Every unit of the Indian Army was ordered to create groups to discuss current affairs and the rationale for the war. Any antipathy soldiers had towards the war, or the empire, was supposed to pale in comparison to the hatred that would be fanned for the Japanese. An image of the Japanese soldier as ruthless, fanatical and cruel – but beatable – was deliberately cultivated. By the end of 1943, it was clear that Army Education was "having a good effect – in some cases considerable – in promoting knowledge of the purpose and implications of the war against the Japanese". The Indian Army, in the absence of the mass mobilisation of the subcontinent, had to make the most of the resources and powers directly at its disposal; Army Education was one of the many vehicles it successfully employed to achieve this end.

FIRSTLY THE ISSUE OF MORALE HAD TO BE ADDRESSED. AS EVENTS IN INDIA SHOWED, THE NATION WAS NOT PREPARED FOR TOTAL WAR

Another was the provision of more enlightened welfare amenities for the citizen soldier. The authorities in India gradually realised that morale could be nurtured by ensuring that day-to-day interactions between the army, the citizen soldier and his family were carried out in the most positive manner possible. Morale reports pointed out that a sizeable number of troops in the Indian Army had not enlisted out of any desire to serve the military, "but in order to provide for [their] families". Naturally, therefore, there was "great concern" among soldiers about conditions in the villages, and the importance of village welfare markedly increased as the war wore on, especially with regards to "high prices and [the] scarcity of essentials". It was perhaps fortunate for the army that, as the morale reports put it, "very few soldiers" were "recruited from famine areas" (up to 4 million people had died in a famine that struck Bengal in 1943).

District Soldiers Boards were set up on an all-India basis to look after the domestic interests of fighting men, and the Directorate of Welfare and Amenities (India) introduced women's welfare centres at training depots across the subcontinent.

Racial reforms

The last piece of the morale puzzle related to the racialised policies that had for so long discriminated against Asian members of the British and Commonwealth forces in India. Indian officers were second-class citizens in their own army. At the beginning of the war, there had been only 577 Indian officers in an army nearly 200,000 strong; by the end of the war, there were more than 15,000, with 220 lieutenant colonels and four temporary or acting brigadiers. Whereas in 1939 there had been 10 British officers to every Indian officer

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This c1943 photograph shows Indian soldiers of the 17th Dogra regiment scrambling up a net as part of their training. As well as being physically fit, troops were also encouraged to hate Japanese barbarity

The 11th East African division march to Kalewa, Burma. By August 1945, troops in Burma were impatient with military life and eager to return home

Clement Attlee celebrates the Labour party's triumph in the 1945 election. Indian soldiers also welcomed the news

Indian troops mingle with soldiers from the 81st West African division. By the end of the war, the Commonwealth soldiers were united in their desire for lasting change

GETTY IMAGES

in the army, by 1945, the ratio had fallen to four to one. By early 1942, equal pay had been introduced. In June 1943, it was announced that Indian officers were to have powers of punishment over British army personnel.

By the second half of 1943, it was clear that a spirit of reform had begun to take root in the Indian Army. But improvements in morale meant little if the army could not master the technical challenges of confronting the Japanese in the jungle. Central to this process of tactical transformation was the work of the Infantry Committee, India, which convened in May 1943. It was apparent to the committee that the close character of the fighting in the jungle required soldiers to make rapid decisions when they came into contact with the enemy; acting without delay could be the difference between success and failure, life and death. Accordingly, vast, centrally controlled, tactical training programmes were set up to better prepare soldiers for the challenge of jungle warfare. New recruits and veterans alike were taught how to live, move and fight in the jungle.

The Infantry Committee also pointed to the need for a simple, consistent and recognised jungle warfare technique. There were, it noted, numerous jungle warfare doctrines in circulation, some of them fundamentally different from others. The committee now recommended that trained soldiers should follow one, and only one, approach. This new operational method was set out in the fourth edition of 'Military Training Pamphlet No. 9 (India): Jungle Warfare', more commonly known as the 'Jungle Book'. Published in September 1943, the 'Jungle Book' effectively became the tactical bible of the Indian Army in Burma.

To improve matters further, reinforcements started to pour in from other parts of the empire. The presence of all these new troops, and increasingly well-prepared formations in Burma, offered an opportunity to decisively retake the initiative in south-east Asia. At Imphal and Kohima, between March and June 1944, the 14th Army inflicted a crushing defeat on Japanese forces. Then, in November 1944, it launched its famous 'Capital' offensive. By May 1945, it had captured Rangoon, in the process outmanoeuvring and outfighting a much larger Japanese force than was ever encountered by the Americans in the Pacific.

> **AN ARMY WITHOUT IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTION HAD BEEN SUPERSEDED BY A CONFIDENT, HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND WELL-TRAINED FORCE**

A disparate army without ideological conviction had been superseded by a flexible, confident, highly motivated, innovative, increasingly culturally representative and highly trained force. The transformation of the British and Commonwealth armies in the far east was complete.

The winds of change

There was much to be proud of, therefore, on 15 August 1945. But there was a caveat: victory had taken far longer than anyone might have anticipated in 1941. As a consequence, the war let loose powerful agents of change. In Britain, it resulted in the political earthquake of Labour's landslide victory in the July 1945 general election, an outcome that evoked "mainly favourable comments" among British soldiers who were anxious for social change back home.

Indian soldiers also "welcomed… the advent of a Labour government", as they believed it augured "hope for India's future". Accordingly, there was much interest in the forthcoming Indian elections and "in the future of Congress".

Reports on west African troops noted the creation of "associations and brotherhoods" of a "semi-political nature" in 82nd (West African) Division and indications of a more general politicisation across the division, as illustrated by sympathies with strikers in Nigeria and "annoyance at the suppression of certain Nigerian newspapers". Meanwhile, the censors worried about anti-Indian feelings among east African troops, amid concerns that veterans might provoke trouble for the Indian community in east Africa on their return.

But, more generally, the letters of east African troops captured the hopes of all the soldiers in the far east: there was a "marked interest in postwar affairs", as writers sought to make personal sense of the seismic changes that had accompanied the war. These would lead eventually to the reorientation of the political economy of Britain and the dissolution of empire.

Victory was great, but more than anything else, citizens and subjects of the empire wanted to "see more and better schools and hospitals"; they wanted payback for their many years of sacrifice. To succeed, 'big ideas' had, from start to finish, to take account of the 'little stories' of ordinary people. The war had not been an end in itself for the soldiers of the British Commonwealth. It was a step on the road towards a greater aspiration, political and social reform and, above all, a better life.

Jonathan Fennell is a reader in modern history at King's College London. His multi-award winning book *Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* was published by Cambridge in 2019

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In 1942, British and Commonwealth forces in the east were divided, dispirited and defeated by the Japanese at every turn. Two years later, they were on an unstoppable surge to victory. On the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender, **Jonathan Fennell** chronicles one of the great transformations of the Second World War

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Sharp shooters
Soldiers from the 11th East African division are trained in using anti-aircraft guns in Ceylon, 1944. The division was involved in the Burma campaign, which was a decisive victory for British and Commonwealth forces

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"The prejudice still surrounding Africa is absolutely rooted in a racist past"

In her new BBC Four series, **Afua Hirsch** explores how artists in three African nations are responding to their traumatic histories. She speaks to Matt Elton about the continent's past, and its bright future

CLEAR STORY-BBC

Accompanies Afua Hirsch's BBC Four series **African Renaissance**

Your new series, *African Renaissance*, explores the art of three African nations. How did you decide which countries to focus upon?

Given that Africa is a continent of more than 50 countries and incredible human, cultural, geographic and historical diversity, we wanted to focus on countries with a rich ancient culture and contemporary art scene. I felt that it was also really important to tell stories from the African continent that are less familiar to people in Britain, because we can sometimes follow slightly colonial patterns of tending to look at the nations that are most well-known as Commonwealth members or former British colonies.

The first country we explore is Senegal, a former Francophone French colony with a fascinating precolonial history and an interesting story of resistance against empire, which has produced some incredible art as a result of that journey. It's also somewhere that I have lived, so I have a personal attachment to it.

Secondly, we went to Ethiopia, which has an ancient Christian tradition and a vibrant contemporary art scene. The third country, Kenya, is probably more familiar to British people – but although they may think of its wildlife and landscape, they probably haven't fully engaged with its cultural history.

So each country had a story that we felt was a bit different to the ones that people are used to hearing, and each has so much to offer the world in terms of the sheer brilliance of the art that it's now producing.

Is it too reductive to say that the art and culture of all three of these nations is, to some extent, defined by their struggles for liberation?

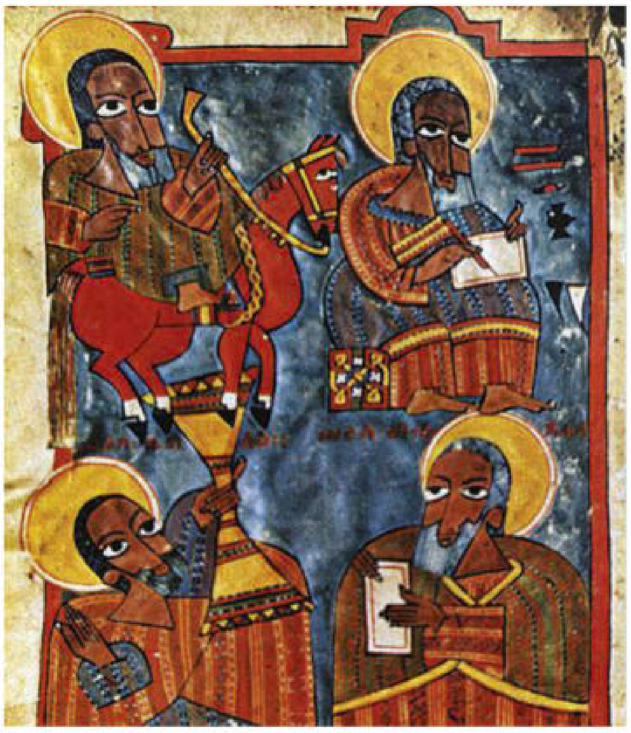
You can't ignore the history of empire, colonialism and the struggle for liberation, and it looks very different in all of those three countries. Kenya had a violent struggle with colonialism, and its resistance movement is quite well known. Senegal's story is unique, because its Sufi Islam prophets led the resistance and have become embedded in its religious, literary and artistic culture as a result. Finally, Ethiopia was never formally colonised, so it stands out as the only country on the African continent to not have experience of settlers or European colonialism. But it had its struggles against invasion by Italy under Mussolini in the 1930s.

However, it's also important not to simply reduce the story of African nations to either the fact that they were colonised or their resistance to empire. In Europe, we tend to locate ourselves at the centre of stories about Africa. Even when we do acknowledge African resistance, we still frame it in terms of Britain or France's role and how that affected the way in which Africans think about themselves. That's an important story, but it's also not the only story. African culture existed before Europeans came to Africa and it continues to thrive – indeed, it's now reclaiming much of the space that Europeans controlled. So while it's crucial to engage with colonial history, it's also crucial not to repeat it by being colonial in the way in which we now think about how those stories are told.

You argue in the series that Ethiopia is a nation with a proud, significant culture that is equal to any in the west. What was your experience like there?

That was a really powerful experience for me. I was struck by the irony of Europeans travelling to Ethiopia feeling that they needed to 'civilise' or Christianise a country that was Christian before any part of the British Isles was. It was a really profound experience to go to the city of Aksum and see the shrine which people believe houses the Ark of the Covenant containing the sacred tablets on which the Ten Commandments are transcribed – received directly from God by Moses, as the story goes. It's a site of pilgrimage surrounded by a unique culture, and it was amazing to see these ancient monuments, and to be part of that biblical story, in the context of a nation that hasn't been colonised and has rejected many globalised imperial norms. For example, Ethiopia doesn't subscribe to international time zones – it has its own time zone and its own calendar.

One of the experiences I found most affecting was visiting the museum of the Red Terror, which explores communist rule in Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991. It was moving to see how the trauma of that period has been converted into art that speaks on a really human level of the suffering and resilience of Ethiopians. People know Ethiopia for the wrong things: for tyrannical government and for famine, which was a generation-defining view of Ethiopia. When you talk to Ethiopian artists they tell those same stories – because those, of course, remain things that happened to Ethiopia. But, instead of the west's rather infantalising narrative of victimhood, they tell those stories in a way that humanises them and gives them agency.



Religious icons A 14th-century illustration from an Ethiopian Coptic Christian manuscript. The faith's long history in that nation makes attempts to 'Christianise' it particularly ironic, says Afua Hirsch

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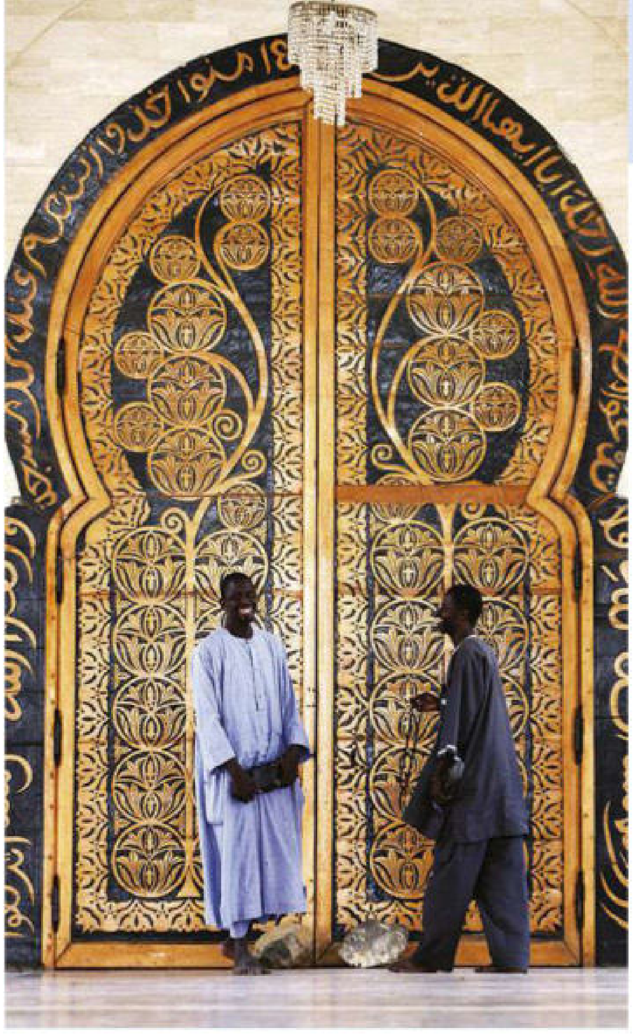
PREVIOUS PAGE:
Historian and broadcaster Afua Hirsch (pictured fifth from left), with Kenya's Samburu people during the filming of her new series. "British people went to Kenya, saw fertile land and they wanted it," she says

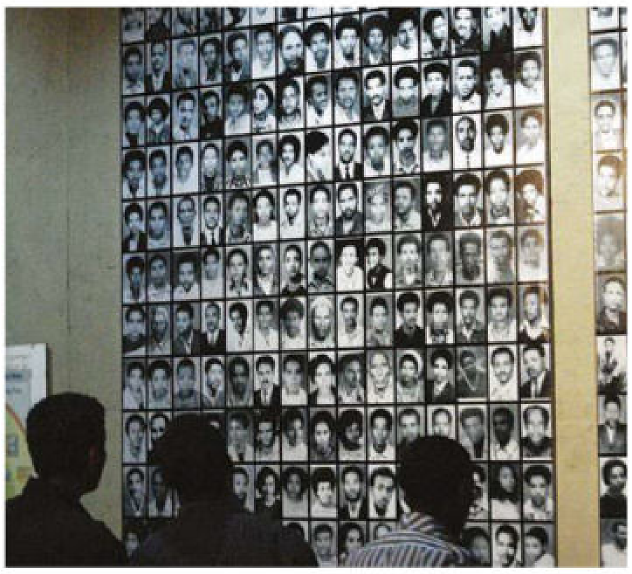
When Europeans discovered Africa was home to cultures and civilisations that existed long before theirs, they made up a story of it as a 'dark continent', which has been incredibly pervasive. Why do you think it's exerted such a hold on the popular imagination?

Imperialism was, in some ways, very sophisticated. It was recognised that you can't rule people by force alone; you have to make them believe in their own inferiority, and also persuade European people of their superiority to justify what would otherwise be murder and theft. You can't go to a country and take people's land and destroy their heritage unless you can convince people that there is some kind of moral imperative in doing so. The ideology that underpinned this was very powerful: it persuaded generations of people that this was the right thing to do. It also persuaded people who were colonised that it was their moral destiny to be ruled over because they were primitive or savage.

It's now very clear how racist, toxic and destructive those ideas were. But I, and many



Religious culture An ornately decorated door at the Great Mosque in Touba, Senegal. Islam has played a key role in that nation's cultural development



Remembering the victims An exhibit at the Red Terror Martyrs' Memorial Museum, showing people killed by Ethiopia's communist regime

other people, were raised in their shadow. My mother was born in a British colony, the Gold Coast – now Ghana – and she went to school being told that Britain was superior and that her own history was one of savagery. That kind of brainwashing goes deep into the psyche, and unpacking it takes generations.

Though Africans have rejected that ideology for decades – and the independence movements that brought about the end of the British empire were a wholesale rejection of those ideas – their psychological consequences take longer to unpick. That's why I love talking to artists: they have a unique way of getting to the roots of these historical, psychological forces and disrupting them with their creativity. I think it helps all of us to ask which parts of that ideology still shape our thinking, and engage with people who challenge us to see things in ways that don't bear the stain of the racist thinking that led to Africa being colonised in the first place.

How do these artists, particularly young artists, in the countries that you visited view their own histories?
There was a real defiance among the artists I spoke to. They're no longer interested in positioning themselves and all of their work as a response to colonialism in a way that was maybe the case for the generation that had to fight it head on. I think that Africans generally are rejecting the narrative that they have to prove themselves to the west or that they even care what the western media says about them.

They're talking to each other, and reaching out to other parts of the world – to South America or China, for instance – in order to create new conversations. It was refreshing, and quite humbling, to realise that they didn't care whether or not we persuade British TV audiences that they're making good art. They are making good art and, if we're fortunate enough to experience it, we'll learn a lot from them. There's a spirit of not seeking approval or being apologetic any more – of just forging new ways of doing things.

As you mentioned, you also visited Senegal. How far do its French influences still manifest themselves today?
It's impossible to ignore. There were many more French settlers in Senegal than there were in equivalent British west African colonies, and there was an idea of becoming 'French' that the British didn't export to their former empire. Britain never tried to tell Nigerians or Ghanaians that they were really British in the same way that France had an idea of French-speaking Africa being somehow French. That really penetrated the identities of people in countries such as Senegal.

But, at the same time, Senegal's people have such a rebellious, religious history. The form of Islam that's practised in Senegal has always been very much part of a resistance movement against Eurocentric ideas and imperialism. Those are therefore two quite powerful forces – the French identity, and that form of Islam – pulling in different directions. The way in which people wrestle with that tension and express it through their art is one of the reasons that there's an electric spark in Senegal. We took a broad approach to what we mean by 'art', too: we looked at dance, music, craft and jewellery-making and painting and sculpture. You find that expression in so many different mediums, which is why telling the entire story of somewhere as fascinating as Senegal in one episode is such a challenge. But we tried to pack in as much as possible, in as thoughtful a way as we could.

The idea of giving African people back control of the narrative is particularly interesting when it comes to Kenya. How did the British manufacture a story about Kenya, and what is its legacy today?
The narrative the British created of Kenya was that it was a land of empty space. British people went to Kenya, saw fertile land and compelling wildlife and they wanted it. It was a source of enrichment and exotic holidays, and a way of dominating and acquiring new resources for themselves. Justifying all of that required creating an idea that there was nothing there already, that it was a primordial landscape of savannahs and big skies and red suns. I'm sure you can picture that image of Kenya: a giraffe majestically running across an empty plain as a huge red sun sets in the distance.

What that narrative erases is *people*. The people of Kenya had been there for centuries before any Europeans ever saw that land. The extent to which that narrative has persisted is frustrating: people still like to romanticise an idea of Kenya as a place of open space. It's almost like a blank canvas for Europeans to play on.

That, obviously, is not true, and Kenya now has a vibrant urban culture. We went to its capital, Nairobi, which is the exact opposite of the idea of empty space. It's the tech capital of east Africa: innovative and bustling, with

> **" People still like to romanticise an idea of Kenya as a place of open space. It's almost like a blank canvas for Europeans to play on "**

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a whole generation of innovators hustling and jostling and moving at lightning speed. People get around on a form of transport called *matatus*, which have become an iconic part of the modern Kenyan experience – a bit like London's red buses or New York's yellow taxis. A Kenyan artist, Dennis Muraguri, has depicted them in a series of paintings, turning them into an art form. It's beautiful to see, and one of many ways in which artists are dismantling the idea of Kenya as a kind of rural, primordial place.

This, of course, isn't a light story, and the trauma of colonialism, and the struggle to overturn it, is still playing out in many ways in modern Kenya. I think it would be healthy for British people, too, to engage more with the truth of what happened in Kenya and how the dispossession that it involved has left a legacy that's difficult to overturn.

Are there any resistance figures, whether political, religious or social, from these three nations who you think deserves more attention in the west?

I think *all* of the resistance figures need more attention. I met a survivor of a former Mau Mau detention centre in Kenya, an old man who, with great dignity, told the story of what he endured in that place at the hands of the British. There's still an idea in Britain that the Mau Mau were terrorists trying to destroy the successful economy of a great British colony, whereas, really, they were fighting for what every human wants: the right to control their own story, to be respected and treated as equal, and to have access to their own land. The fact they had to fight for such basic things is, I think, still not recognised enough in the west – even despite the United States having had a president, Barack Obama, whose father experienced that struggle. So there is a lot for British people to learn about that history and the pain that still endures.

In Senegal, meanwhile, we saw the Baye Fall – religious followers of the prophets who fought colonial rule and led the nation to independence. Theirs is a really interesting story about Islam and African identity that isn't well known outside Senegal. The sect's rituals are a kind of experiential artform, with lots of singing and dancing and graffiti telling the stories of figures such as Sheikh Aamadu Bamba, who led the religious resistance movement. There are images of him in every city; people devote their lives to following him. Such stories have, sadly, never really been well known in Britain.

Political prisoner A young member of Kenya's Kikuyu tribe is held in a prison camp, December 1952. The period saw the population of what was then a British colony revolt against its imperial rulers

Art and faith Members of the Baye Fall religious movement in Senegal, whose rituals are a "kind of experiential artform, with lots of singing and dancing and graffiti"

> "It's important to shed the ideas that many people still have of Africa as the 'dark continent', a place humanity forgot and that offered nothing to the world"

How would you like viewers of this series to reappraise the history and culture of these nations, and Africa more generally?

I think it's really important, fundamentally, to shed the ideas that many people still have of Africa as a 'dark continent': the place that humanity forgot and that offered nothing to the world; that image of a primitive forest of people in mud huts, untouched by modernism and invention.

Every single thing I just said is the opposite of the truth about the African continent and its millennia of civilisation. There is an incredible continuity of tradition, culture, history, literature and art in every single country on the continent. You can't appreciate that, no matter how much you look for it, unless you begin to undo some of the conditioning that many of us in Britain – including myself – grew up with. I only saw Africa in the media if something terrible had happened, whether a famine or a war.

When, as a child, I made my first trip to Ghana – the country of my mother's heritage – my school friends were shocked when I said I would call them, because they couldn't imagine there were phones there. This was in the 1990s, and I know this still happens today.

So it's important to recognise the strength and pervasiveness of the misconception and prejudice that still surrounds the African continent. It is absolutely rooted in a racist past that we haven't confronted in Britain. But, to be more positive, if we *are* able to start to shed and challenge some of those preconceptions, we will find a continent that is forging ahead. It isn't asking Europeans to take it seriously – it just *is* serious, solving its own problems, and reinventing itself. It has the youngest population in the world and is a hub of innovation, entrepreneurialism, and incredible cultural creativity. I would say: ignore that at your peril.

In a way, then, Africa doesn't need Europe, but Europe has a lot to learn if it opens its eyes. That's the message that comes through these programmes. It is a series about art – and you can watch it just to see beautiful art if you want. But if you pay attention, you will also start to understand where this continent has been, where it's heading, and why everyone in the world should take it seriously. **H**

MORE FROM US

Hear more of Afua Hirsch's thoughts on African culture on our **podcast**. Listen at *historyextra.com/podcast*

Afua Hirsch is a writer, historian and broadcaster, whose books include *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging* (Jonathan Cape, 2018). Her new TV series, *African Renaissance*, is due to air in August on BBC Four

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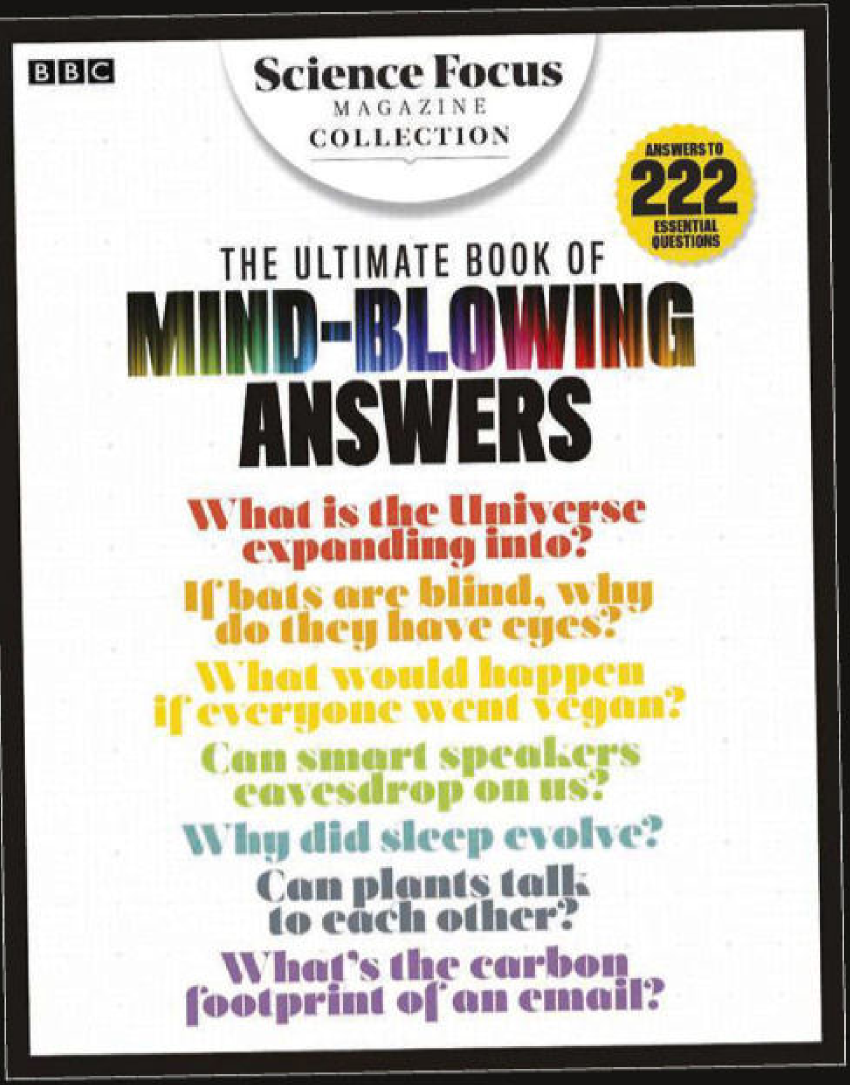
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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

A rainbow flag fans out across the streets of New York at a Pride march

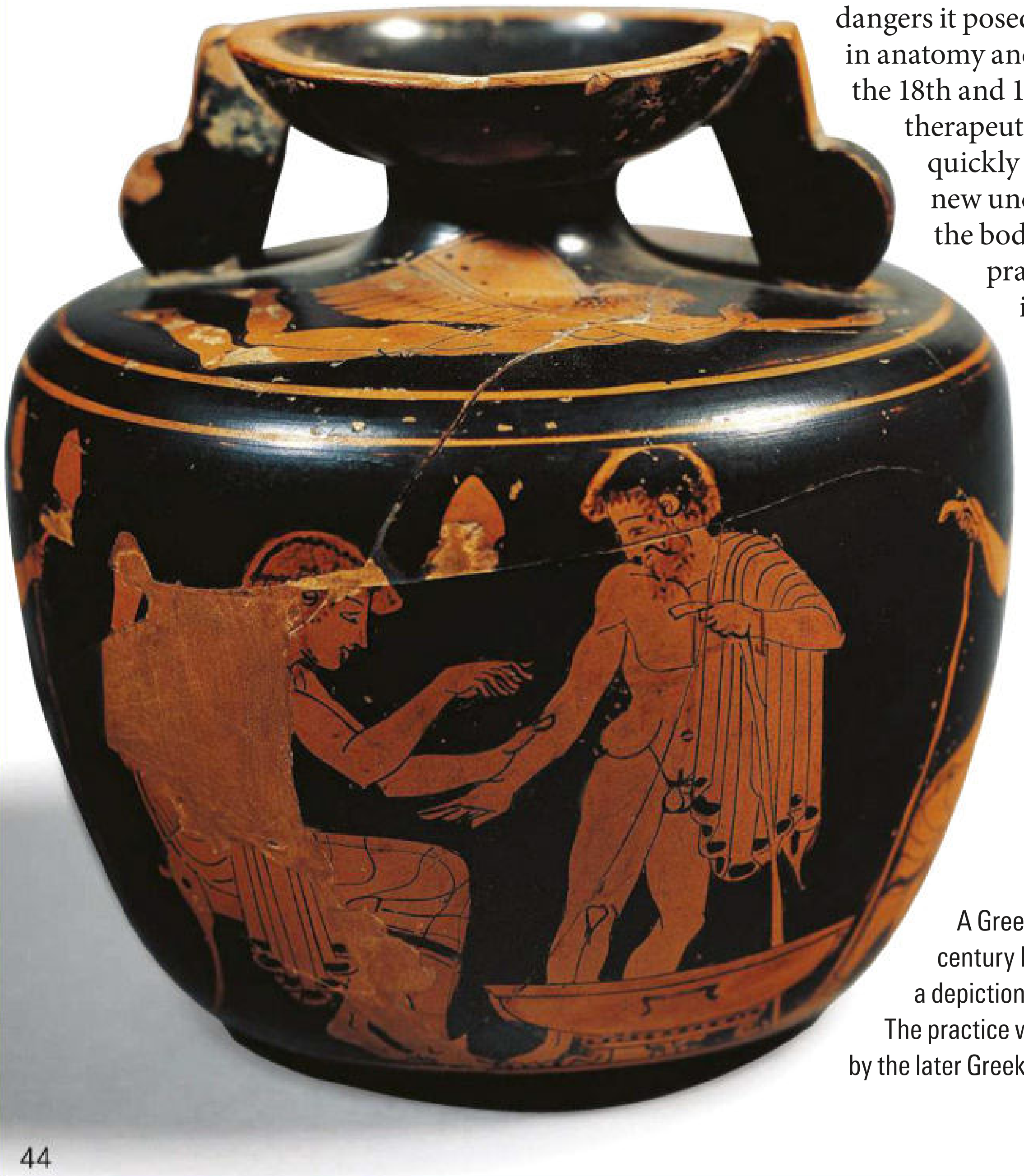
Why did doctors believe that bloodletting would improve a patient's health?

››› Bloodletting dates back thousands of years to the Egyptians. It gained widespread popularity through the writings of the Greek physician Galen, who practised medicine in Rome during the second century AD. He believed that humans carried four bodily humours inside them: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. When these four humours became imbalanced, a person became ill. Health could be restored through purging, starving, vomiting, or bloodletting – all of which would help rid the body of the superfluous or corrupt humours.

While bloodletting may seem barbaric to modern eyes, it was considered a standard part of medical treatment for centuries, demanded by patients themselves. Take George Washington, who woke on the morning of 14 December 1799 complaining that he couldn't breathe. Fearing his doctor would not arrive in time, Washington asked for the overseer of his slaves to step in and bleed him. The cut was deep, and Washington lost nearly half a pint before the wound was closed. When the physicians eventually arrived, they proceeded to bleed Washington four more times over the next eight hours. By evening, America's first president was dead. One of his physicians, James Craik, later admitted that he thought the blood loss was partly responsible for Washington's demise.

But why did bloodletting remain so popular for so long given the dangers it posed? Despite advances in anatomy and diagnostics during the 18th and 19th centuries, therapeutics did not evolve quickly enough to match new understandings of the body. Many medical practitioners believed it was better to do something than to do nothing at all.

Lindsey Fitzharris, author of *The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine* (Allen Lane, 2017)



A Greek flask in the sixth century BC, decorated with a depiction of bloodletting. The practice was popularised by the later Greek physician Galen

How did the rainbow flag become a sign of LGBTQ+ pride?

››› The rainbow flag emerged as a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) pride in 1978. A reflection of that decade's focus on a strategy of 'coming out', and demanding equality and liberation, the flag was representative of a turning point in which communities of sexual minorities organised more openly.

The designer of the Pride flag, Gilbert Baker (1951–2017), was a San Francisco artist inspired by the political energy of that city, which saw Harvey Milk become the first openly gay man elected to public office in California in 1977. Baker wanted to create a positive symbol for the emerging movement.

The flag is just one of many symbols for the various identities that make up LGBTQ+ communities, and has itself inspired many more.

Its visibility – especially in the US Pride month of June, which marks the anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Riots – stands as testament to how far LGBTQ+ rights have come in such a short period.

Joshua Hollands, teaching fellow in United States history at University College London's Institute of the Americas

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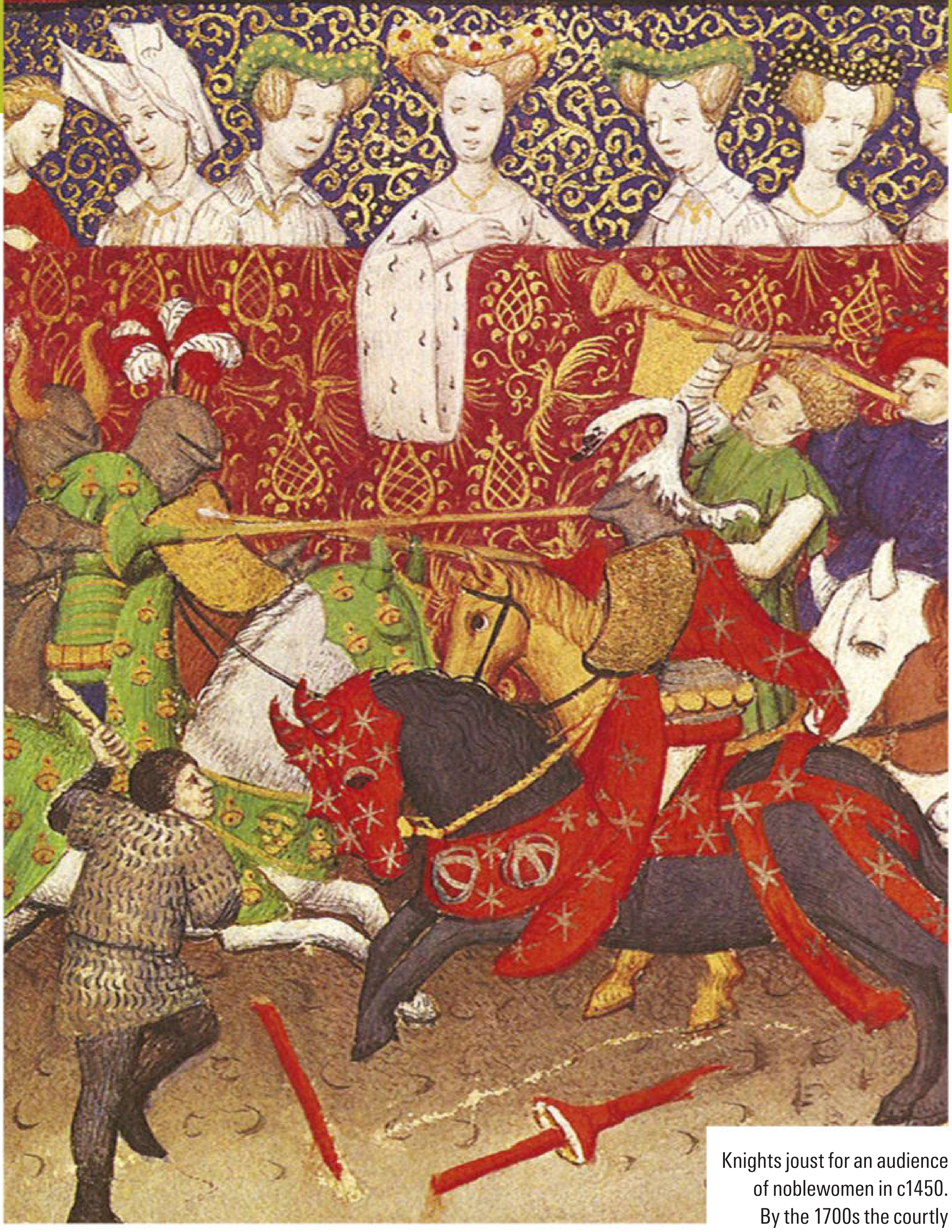


Knights joust for an audience of noblewomen in c1450. By the 1700s the courtly spectacle seemed outdated

MARY EVANS/ALAMY

Why did jousting die out?

▸▸▸ Jousting dominated the medieval sporting world for six centuries – but, by the 1700s, it had run its course and fallen out of fashion. The continuous decline in the importance of the man-at-arms on the battlefield, the increasing efficiency of firearms, and the replacement of jousting with less dangerous forms of court spectacles such as masques and pageants all caused the tournament to fade into history.

In the medieval period, the tiltyard had been a training ground for warfare. Mounted knights assigned to two opposing teams would charge at each other with sharp lances on a given signal, a practice that was deemed to be useful preparation for military combat. Yet, by the 15th and 16th centuries, the increasing formalisation of the joust transformed the sport into a theatre of display that no longer resembled the realities of warfare. This was due to the addition of a tilt barrier to separate the horses, specialised armour, rules for the combats, a new scoring system, and elaborate pageantry.

All reasons for jousting beyond those of exercise and pastime had long passed away by the 17th century, and the changing attitudes of European princes towards the practice of chivalry brought an end to their tradition of sponsoring tournaments.

Although jousts survived a while longer in England, they were increasingly artificial in nature. Pageantry had taken over any real fighting activity, while firearms made knightly charges on the battlefield obsolete, thus signalling the end of the sport.

Emma Levitt, historian specialising in jousting and masculinity

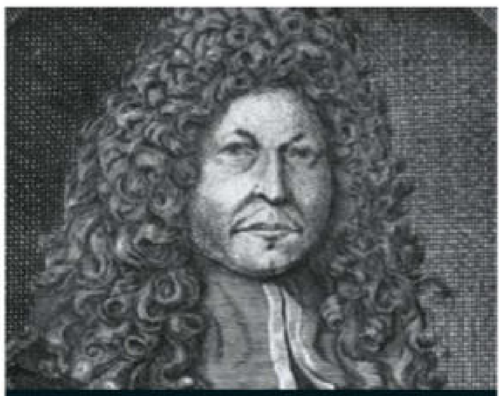
DID YOU KNOW…?

Badge of dishonour

One of the last two men to be hanged for murder in Britain **left a Royal Life Saving Society medallion with his name inscribed on it at the scene of his crime**. Gwynne Owen Evans, together with Peter Allen, killed John West during a bungled burglary in April 1964. One of the chief pieces of evidence against him was a medallion marked "G. O. Evans", found in the pocket of a coat he forgot to remove from West's house.

Channel hopping

The first recorded **day trip from London to France and back** took place in 1619. According to a contemporary chronicler, Bernard Calvert mounted his horse in Southwark at 3am on 17 July. He rode to Dover, arriving at 7am, and took ship for Calais. On reaching the French port, he returned on the same ship, and rode back to London, arriving at 8pm. He had ridden 142 miles and sailed 44 but was still said to be "fresh and hearty".

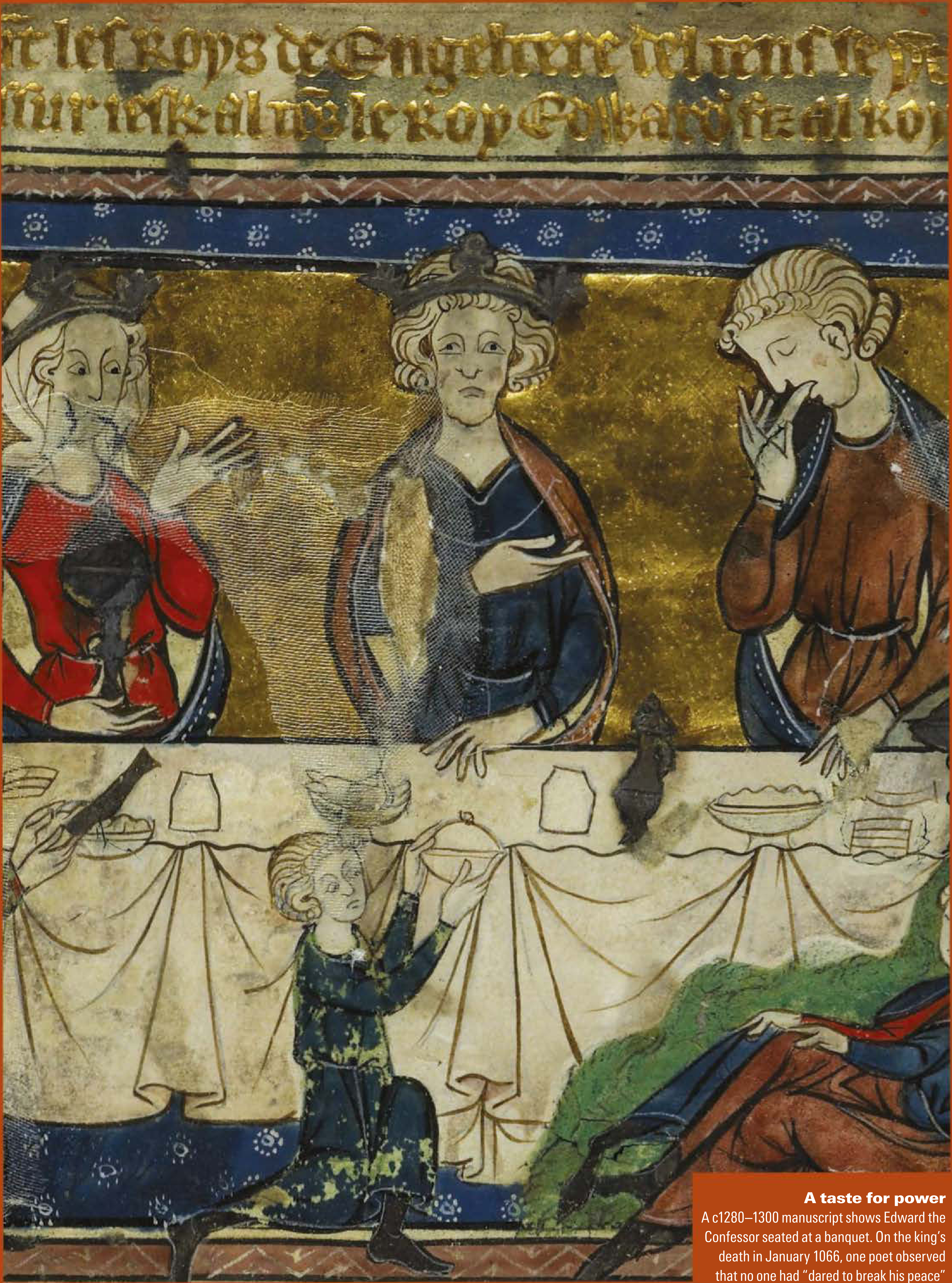


Flemish surgeon Philip Verheyen, who dissected his own amputated leg

Putting in the legwork

The anatomist who first **named the Achilles tendon did so after dissecting his own leg**. The 17th-century Flemish surgeon Philip Verheyen was originally a farm labourer, until his intellectual brilliance was recognised and he was able to attend university. Obliged, through illness, to have his left leg amputated, he had it preserved and later partly dissected it himself. In his *Corporis Humani Anatomia* of 1693, he was the first writer to link the tendon in the heel to the Homeric hero. H

Nick Rennison, author specialising in history



A taste for power

A c1280–1300 manuscript shows Edward the Confessor seated at a banquet. On the king's death in January 1066, one poet observed that no one had "dared to break his peace"

England's holy hardman

Edward the Confessor has widely been cast as a saintly but feeble king – a dreary bit-part player in the great crisis of 1066. Yet, writes **Tom Licence**, scrutinise the sources and what emerges is a hard-nosed, vigorous leader who was prepared to do whatever it took to protect his crown

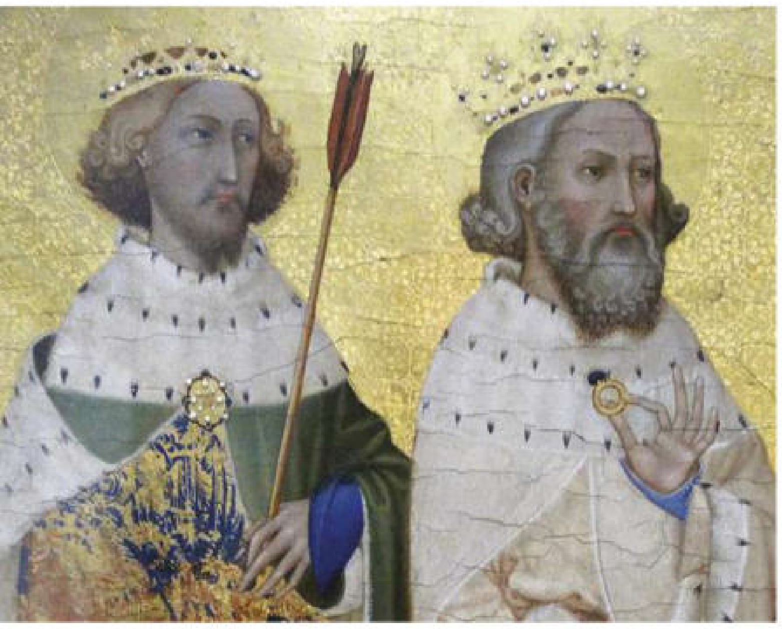
BRIDGEMAN

Think of Edward the Confessor, and you'll probably imagine an old, grey king, approaching death. This is how we see him depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry, in iconography inspired by his saint's cult, and in TV dramatisations of the Norman conquest. We think of Edward the saint, preparing his soul for heaven, and we regard his reign as a prelude to the more exciting events of 1066. Like Charles Dickens, in his *A Child's History of England*, we quickly pass over "the dreary old Confessor" to get to "the brave Harold". Edward has become linked in our minds with the decline of Anglo-Saxon England, Harold to its final defence. Yet Edward's reign is the key to many mysteries, including how England came to be conquered.

Strong, glorious, feared by his enemies, Edward the Confessor kept England safe for 24 years

Reputations can be misleading. It can take centuries for historians to rewrite them. It was Edward himself, or his courtiers, who planted the idea that he was a holy king who worked miracles. This boosted his mystique. Later, his image was reshaped by medieval monks who wanted to portray him as one of their own. Reinventing him as a 'Confessor' (a saint who 'confessed' the faith by virtuous living), they created a cipher who was revered by pious monarchs, notably Henry III. Edward came to be seen as an otherworldly king, more interested in preparing his soul for heaven than in governing England. The idea soon grew that Edward left the business of ruling the kingdom to his earls, chiefly Godwine and Godwine's son Harold.

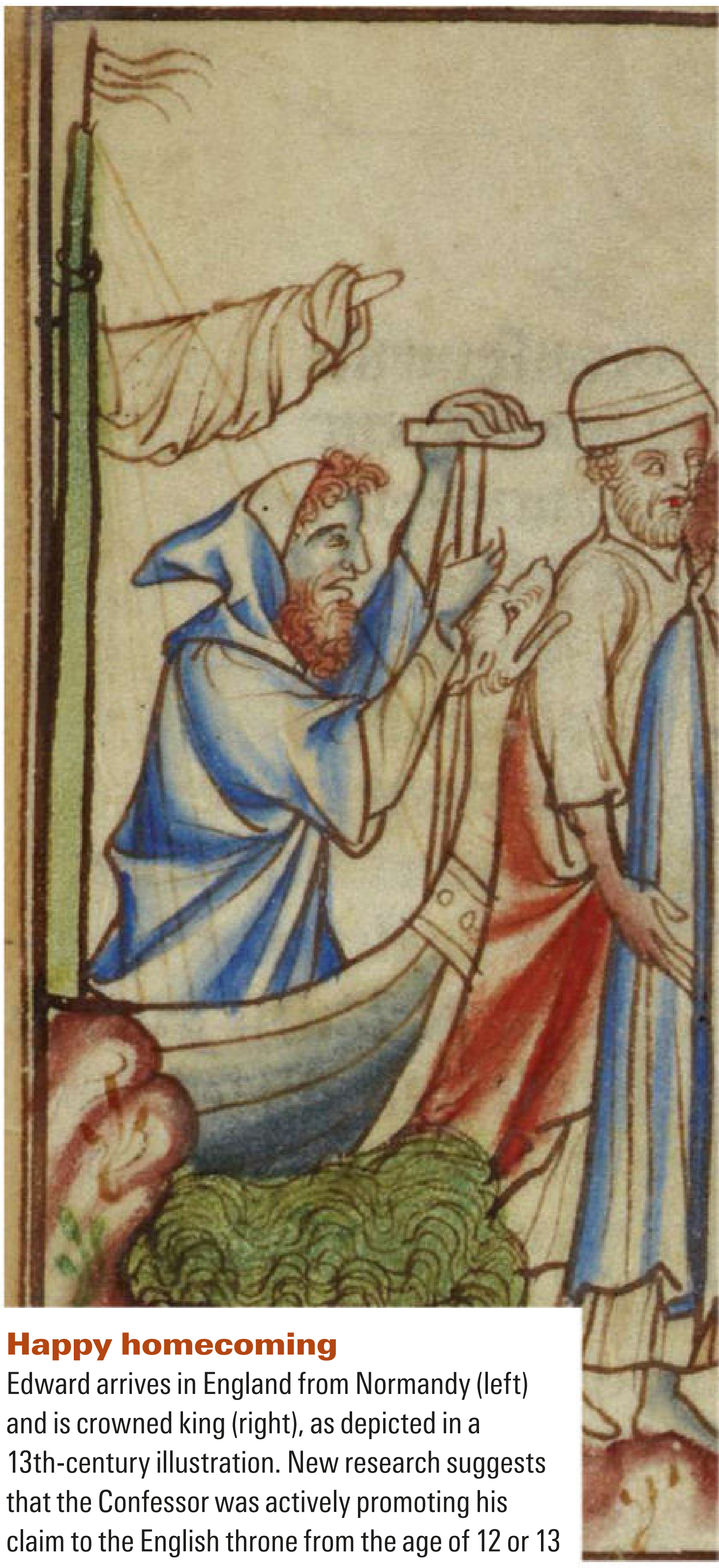
Similar ideas representing Edward as a reluctant, disengaged ruler carried through to modern times in the six-volume history of the Norman conquest by the Victorian scholar EA Freeman. To Freeman, Edward was a "weak king", "a feeble king", "who shrank from the trials of the earthly kingdom". Harold, in contrast, roused his patriotic feeling. As a king who died defending the nation, he seemed a perfect Victorian role model. Praising Harold as "the hero and martyr of our native freedom", Freeman decided that every achievement of Edward's reign was due to Harold's influence.



In holy company

The 'saintly' Edward depicted (right) alongside Edmund of East Anglia in the 1390s. Monks were eager to portray both Anglo-Saxon kings as their own

Freeman (and Dickens) were using history as a tool for creating heroes who appealed to the Victorians. In the process, Edward – a role model for the pre-Reformation church – was brushed aside, while the valiant Harold was credited for his achievements. Today, historians are trained to deconstruct historical reputations in an impartial manner. Instead of accepting the monkish caricature, our training teaches us to query it.



Happy homecoming

Edward arrives in England from Normandy (left) and is crowned king (right), as depicted in a 13th-century illustration. New research suggests that the Confessor was actively promoting his claim to the English throne from the age of 12 or 13

We might start by observing that Edward was not the only king whose reputation was reinvented by monks. King Edmund of East Anglia died, in 869, fighting the Vikings, according to the earliest source we have – the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Yet a century later the monk Abbo of Fleury was portraying him as a holy pacifist who laid down his weapons and surrendered to execution like a sacrificial lamb. Edward the Confessor was no more a feeble, inactive king than Edmund was a passive martyr. Strong, glorious, feared by his enemies, he kept England safe for 24 years.

A king of the blood

Edward was born in c1004, the son of King Æthelred II and Emma of Normandy. He came of a long line of kings stretching back to the semi-legendary Cerdic, founder of the West Saxon dynasty. The blood of kings was believed to run in the male veins of that line. Those who possessed it stood apart, higher than ordinary mortals. Since the days of Alfred the Great (871–99), kings of the blood had extended their rule beyond the confines of Wessex – their original domain – to encompass the whole of England as we know it today. No rival dynasty arose to contest their ancient blood-claim, but in 1016 the Danish ruler Cnut took England by conquest, and Edward fled to Normandy.

Frank Barlow, who wrote a biography of Edward in 1970, regarded his time in Normandy as uneventful. During the 25 years Edward spent there in exile, from 1016 to 1041, Barlow believed he did little to advance his claim to the throne, returning to England only when invited, because the new king, Harthacnut (Cnut's son), had fallen ill, and there was no one but Edward to replace him. Though Barlow challenged the consensus that Edward was little more than a monk in a crown, he was wedded to the Victorian idea that Edward was unimpressive.

New research into sources that were unfamiliar or problematic to Barlow shows that Edward actively promoted his claim to the throne. Authentic charters from Normandy, from the 1030s, reveal that even in Cnut's lifetime, the Normans recognised

MORE FROM US

Tom Licence will be discussing Edward the Confessor on a future episode of our **podcast**. Go to *historyextra.com/podcast*

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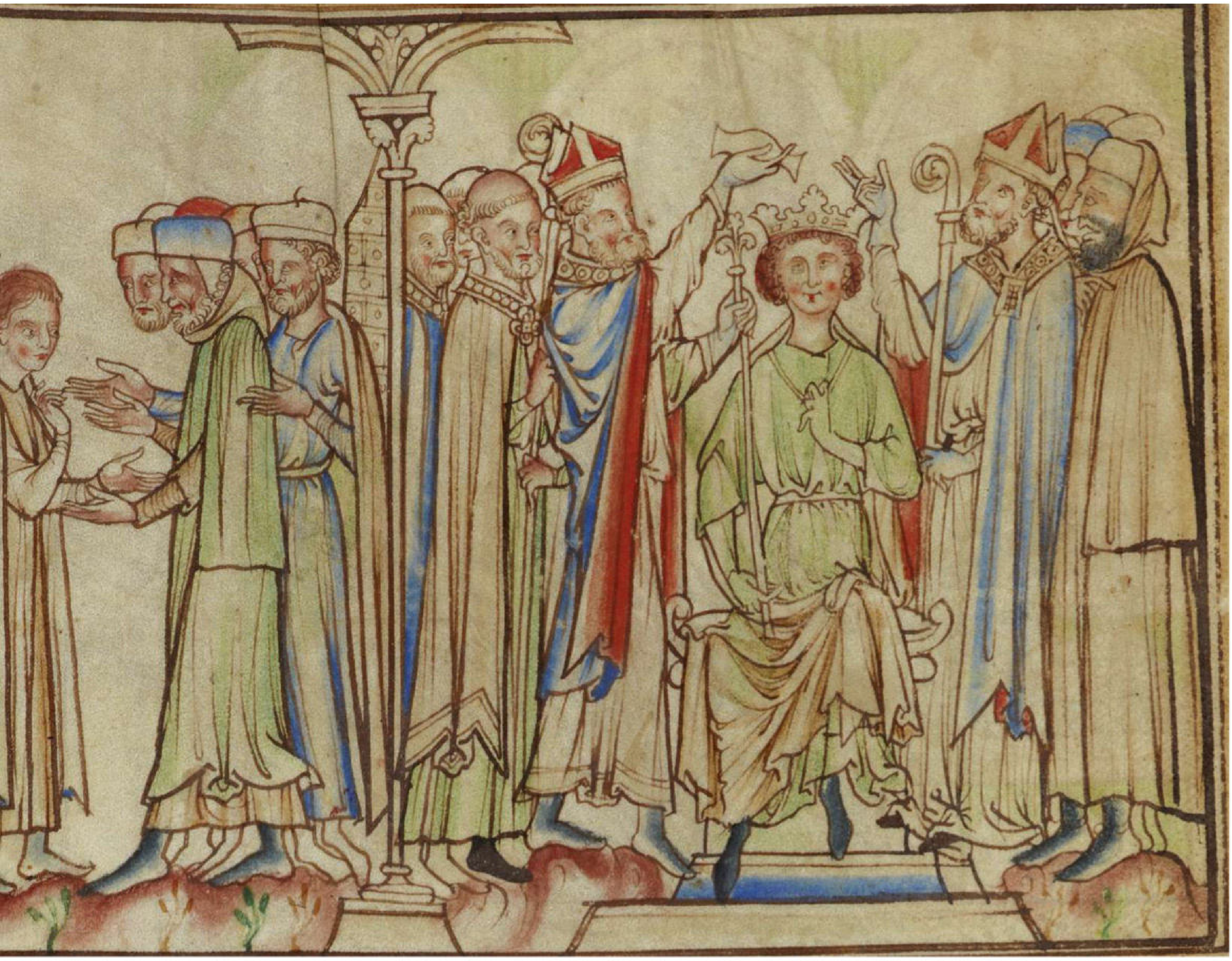


BRIDGEMAN/REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Edward as England's rightful king. In one charter, datable to 1033/34, he adopts the title 'King Edward' and grants land in England to the monks of Mont-Saint-Michel, an abbey on the border of Normandy and Brittany. The fact that he did so signalled his conviction that he would make good his royal title and ability to grant lands not yet in his possession. What is remarkable is that the precocious claimant had shown this conviction as early as 1016, when he promised lands in England to the monks of St Peter's in Ghent in Flanders. He was about 12 or 13 at the time.

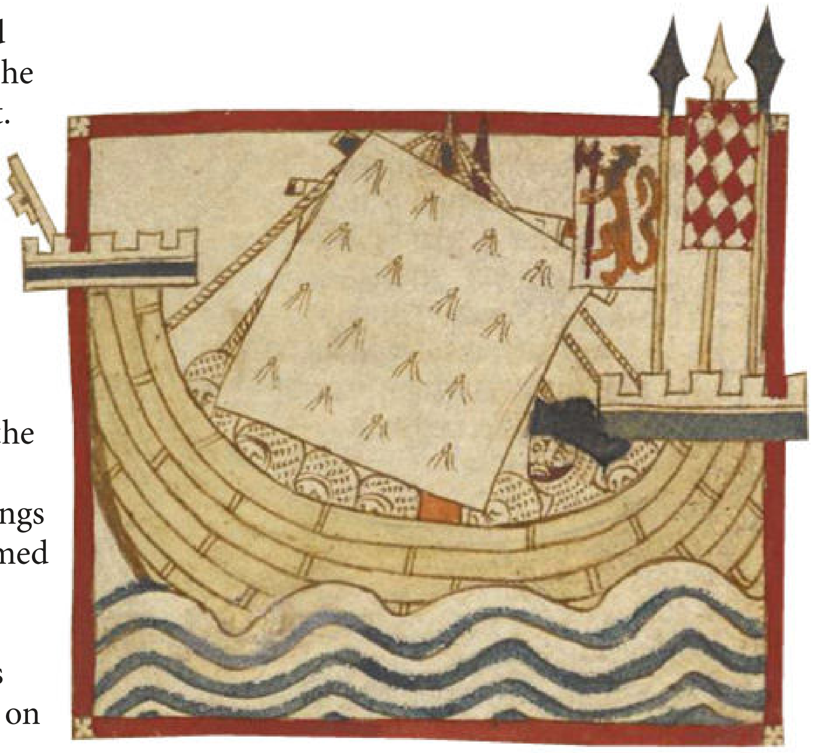
Convinced that he would one day return to England and reclaim the throne of his fathers, Edward convinced his allies that his destiny was written in the stars. In 1033/34 his cousin, Duke Robert of Normandy, applied pressure on Cnut. He launched a fleet to attack England in Edward's name, though bad weather blew it off-course.

In 1036, after Cnut's death, Edward assembled his own fleet and headed for England, which could not decide which of Cnut's two sons should inherit the throne. Hoping to meet with a party that supported his own claim, Edward ran into opposition. He fought them off but was forced to return to Normandy.

Undaunted at this setback, Edward kept up the pressure until 1041, when he again crossed the Channel with a fleet. This time he had done better in laying the groundwork. Tired of Harthacnut's misrule, a delegation led by Earl Godwine received Edward into the government. A year later Harthacnut was dead, and Edward inherited the throne.

Edward now began driving home the message that he was a saviour, sent by God to resurrect the ancient line of kings and usher in a golden age. He proclaimed these ideas by the original means of including the word 'PEACE' on his inaugural coinage and by delaying his coronation by almost a year, to hold it on Easter Day 1043.

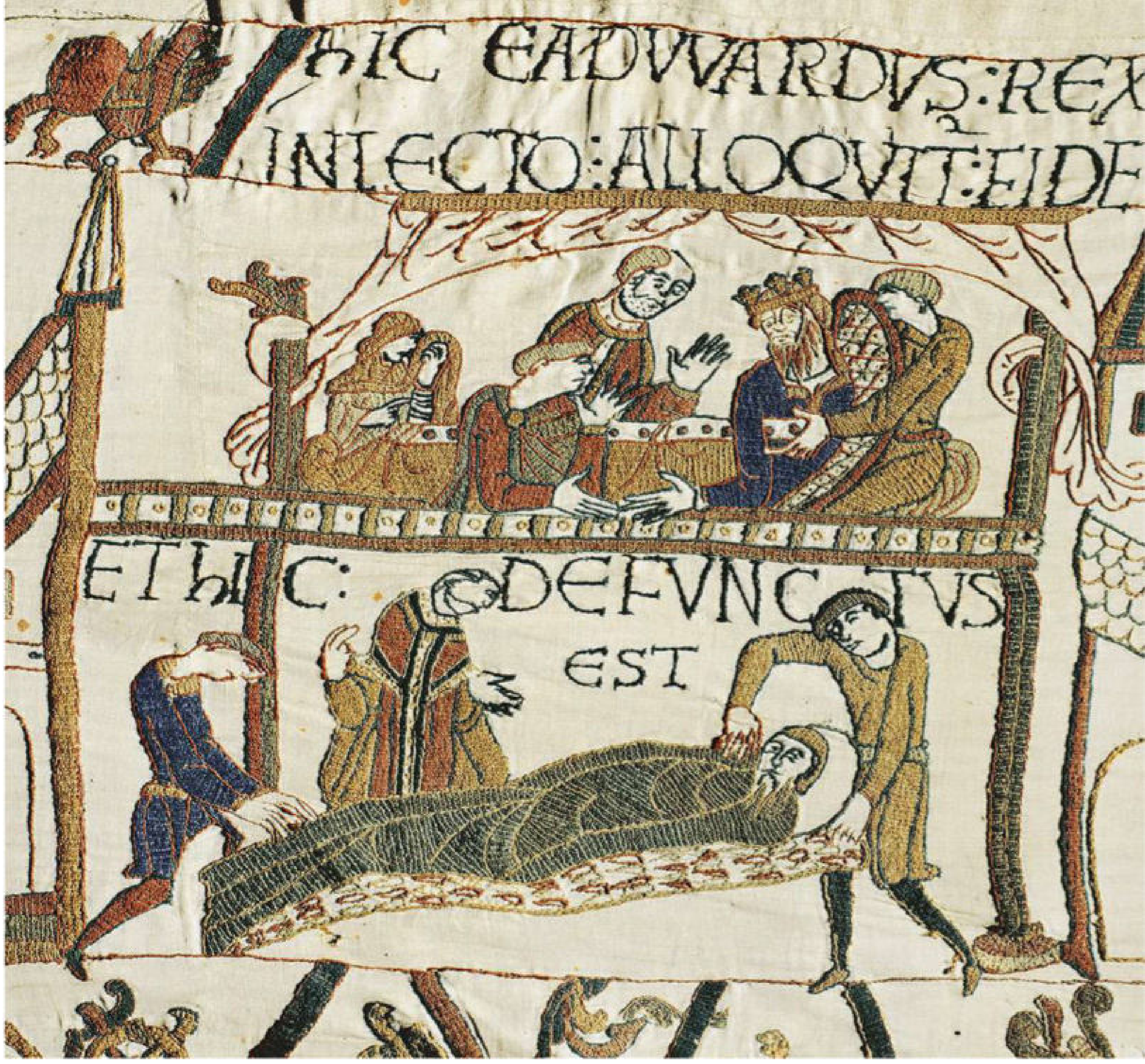
The Christ-like symbolism was striking. Returning from the grave of exile (which was often likened to death), Edward came to redeem his people from Danish captivity.



Dane in the way

A 14th-century depiction of the ship of Cnut, the Danish king of England who for years stood between the Confessor and the throne

> **England had seen lots of fleets in the past 30 years, but none as mighty as Edward's**



Fatal consequences
Edward's death is depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry. On his demise in 1066, the Confessor was overlord of Britain, and poets were hailing him as righteous and skilful in counsel

Peace was a manifesto that he intended to implement. According to his contemporary biographer, one of the first things Edward did was to arrange peace treaties with the lesser kings or princes of the British Isles, and with the neighbouring powers who shared Britain's seaways. Meanwhile, he rewarded the agents who had helped him, including Earl Godwine, and punished those who had not, such as his mother, Emma. Harthacnut was dead of course, but Edward punished him for presuming to occupy the throne by ensuring he was given a bad write-up in the chronicles.

A courtly writer observing Edward at the beginning of the reign in 1042 remarked that he was a good man and a perceptive one too. Nearing 40, the king was no longer a youth. His biographer, writing at the end of the reign in 1065, described him as a man of vigorous action. Another contemporary, at the abbey of Bury St Edmunds, regarded Edward as an energetic man, always busy for the benefit of present and future generations. Barlow, who saw Edward as a king "who never searched for work", appears to have overlooked this evidence, which contradicts his thesis that Edward was lethargic and uncommitted.

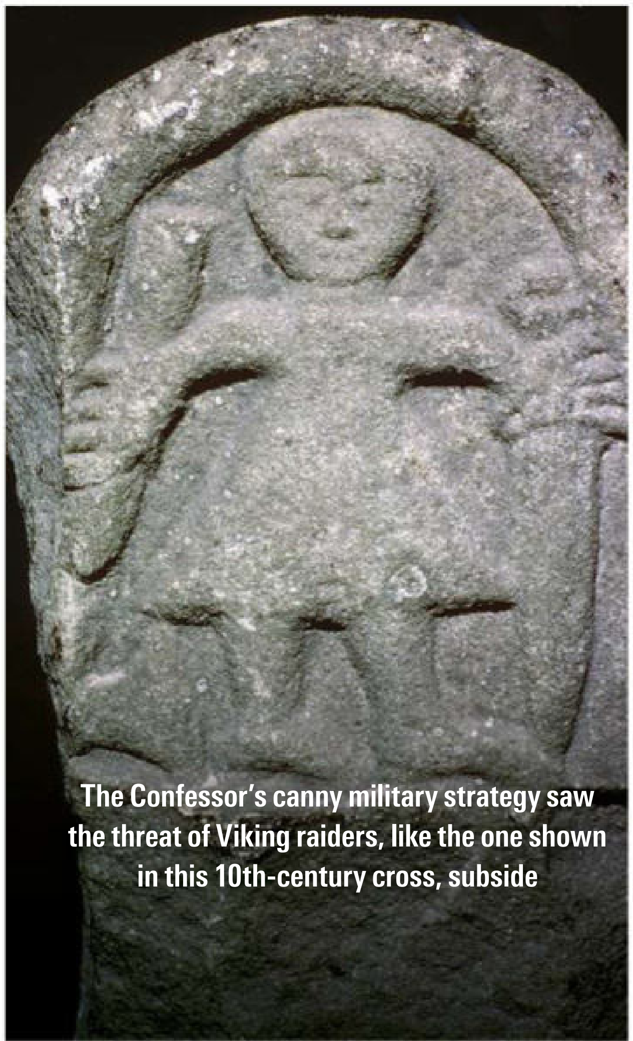
A formidable fleet

Early in his reign, having established peace with his neighbours, Edward ordered the building of a huge fleet and assembled it at Sandwich in Kent – his forward naval base. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle remarks, in 1045, that it was the largest fleet anyone had seen. It is an important piece of evidence revealing Edward's military strategy. In a world shaped by control of the seaways and the ability to transport armies, ships were power itself. England had seen a lot of ships – and some mighty fleets – during the 30 years before Edward's reign, yet nothing quite as large as this. Fleets were expensive to build and maintain. But Edward's operated largely as a deterrent. And it worked.

In the time of Edward's father, Æthelred, Viking raiders from Denmark and Norway were becoming a menace. Between the 990s and 1016, raiders had arrived almost every other year, and there was the chance that the pattern would resume now that England was no longer under Danish control. Mindful of his father's troubles and raids remembered from boyhood, Edward immediately set to guarding the coast. When the king of Denmark requested ships to assist him in his struggle against the king of Norway, Edward refused, allowing the rivals to fight their own battles and weaken each other.

Meanwhile, Edward arranged for coastal towns of the South East to supply ships on an ongoing basis. Abolishing the expensive standing fleet, which relied on crews of Danish mercenaries, Edward substituted this new fleet which could be called upon when needed. The towns charged with providing it later extended their maritime duties and came to be known as the Cinque Ports.

Danger also lurked in the marches, the porous border between Edward's kingdom of England and the realms of the Welsh and Scots. Here, too, Edward was innovative in defence. Wales, in the mid-1040s, was divided between two rival kings named Gruffydd: one in the north, one in the south. Edward's early policy was to ally with the northern Gruffydd against his southern namesake, but he began to discover that the loyalties of the levies in the Welsh borderlands were fluid. Troops raised in Herefordshire to fight the Welsh might turn on their English commanders. Edward's solution was to import French soldiers and order them to set up castles that dominated the frontier. Familiar


The Confessor's canny military strategy saw the threat of Viking raiders, like the one shown in this 10th-century cross, subside

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Short-lived success Victorian historians celebrated Harold II – shown on a coin minted in 1066 – as a patriotic hero, but it was the Confessor who successfully defended his nation

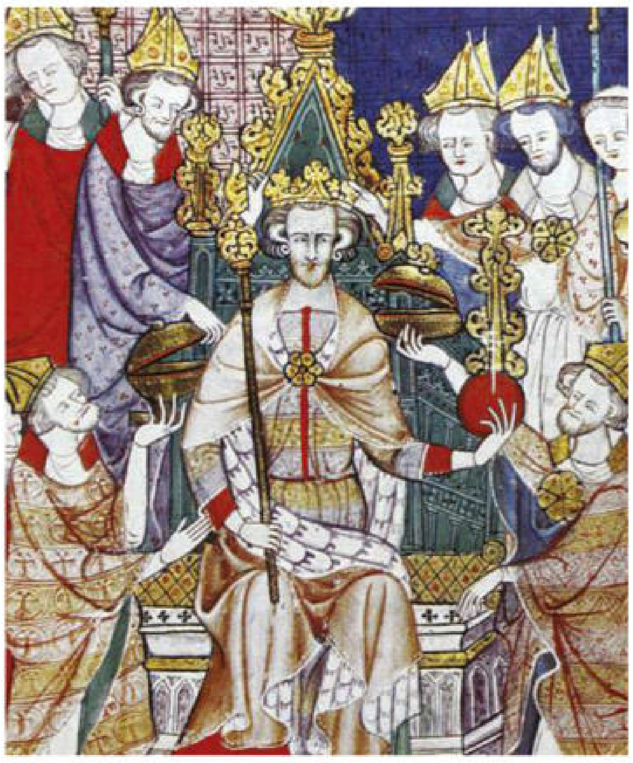
in France as a resource in border warfare, the castles they built were probably more military in appearance and function than the fortified manors occupied by English nobles. French troops were useful to the half-Norman monarch for their expertise in castle warfare, and for their guaranteed loyalty.

While laying foundations for a lasting peace, Edward also did everything he could to procure an heir. When it became clear that his marriage to Edith of Wessex would produce no children, he sent a mission to Germany to negotiate the return of his nephew Edward the Exile. Like Edward, the nephew had gone into exile (as an infant) in 1016. In modern terms, one might say he was next in line for the throne. It is testimony to the power of blood-entitlement that he was recalled after 40 years in a foreign land, just as Edward himself had been recalled after a quarter of a century in Normandy. Unfortunately, the nephew died immediately upon his return, but Edward adopted his son Edgar and gave him the title 'Ætheling', meaning he was of the blood. It was a title reserved for the sons of kings, and it signified that Edgar was to be regarded as Edward's heir.

Though much of his reign was peaceful, Edward did meet opposition, and his attempts to enforce royal justice in the lawless north were unwelcome. In 1065 a rebellion in York targeted his deputy, Earl Tostig. The rebels then marched south to confront Edward himself. Edward wanted to fight, but his commanders melted away. His health failed, and he died in January 1066.

No other monarch that century survived into their sixties. Despite the rebellion, he remained overlord of Britain. Welsh and Scottish kings had opposed him and had paid with their thrones and their heads.

Freeman, thinking Edward inept, attributed his conquests to Harold, a leading commander. But contemporaries praised Edward's achievements. A poem written on his death describes him as righteous and skilful in counsel – qualities that had been noted even at the beginning of his reign. Impressed that he had ruled over all the peoples of Britain, the poet honoured him for being a king who had "defended homeland, country and nation". Neither his father nor his successor succeeded on that front. Another poet wrote that Edward's enemies feared him and "no one dared to break his peace".



The last laugh William I is crowned king of England after defeating Harold II at Hastings. Lacking a cast-iron blood-claim to the throne, Harold was vulnerable to ambitious rivals

On Edward's death, his brother-in-law Harold took the throne, claiming the dead king had promised it to him on his deathbed. No one in England wished to contradict his story, but foreign powers who had been on amicable terms with Edward saw Harold as illegitimate and turned against him. Within months of him taking the throne, Normandy, Boulogne, Flanders, Scotland, Norway and other principalities were plotting Harold's downfall. Even the papacy got involved.

Harold was a strong leader, but he lacked the blood-claim that was central to the Edwardian conception of kingship. In the space of a fateful year, punctuated by Harold's death in battle and William's coronation, the peace Edward had built for nearly a quarter of a century dissolved in bloody conquest.

Tom Licence is professor of medieval history at the University of East Anglia. His new book, *Edward the Confessor: Last of the Royal Blood*, is published by Yale in August. Tom will be delivering a virtual lecture on Edward the Confessor on Thursday 20 August. For more details and tickets visit *historyextra.com/events*

LISTEN To listen to historian Stephen Baxter discuss Edward the Confessor on BBC Radio 3's **The Essay**, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06w5zjl*

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DID THE CONFESSOR PROMISE HIS THRONE TO THE CONQUEROR?

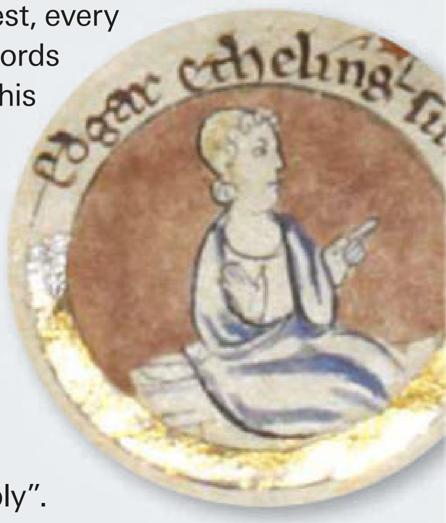
Tom Licence examines competing theories on who Edward intended to inherit the English crown after his death

One of the great debates of Edward's reign is whether he promised the throne to William, Duke of Normandy. The larger question to consider is whether he promised the throne to more than one person, including Harold.

Some historians see Edward as a wily monarch who dangled the throne before multiple candidates to get them to do his bidding. Their case rests on the insistence of William's supporters, and Harold's, that Edward had promised the throne to their man. The problem is that all the noise about alleged promises post-dates 1066. There is not a shred of evidence from Edward's lifetime for any of it.

If Edward promised the throne to William (c1051, as is claimed) the Normans would have shouted it from the rooftops. But Norman writings of the 1050s and early 1060s, though interested in the duchy's affairs, never allude to any promise or expectation that William should inherit England's throne. Harold's case is equally doubtful because it rests on the assertions of his supporters and was evidently not taken seriously by European powers.

One reason historians take their claims seriously today is that they have gained a semblance of authority over 950 years. But in 1065 it would have been virtually unthinkable that the throne should go to someone not of the blood. Apart from the usurper Cnut and the dynasty he briefly established by conquest, every king as far back as records went had qualified by his blood-claim.



By taking the throne from Edgar Ætheling (shown, right, in an illuminated family tree), Harold changed the rules. It was like putting a sign on the throne, saying "anyone may now apply". William decided he had as much of a right as Harold. An opportunist, he did whatever he could get away with and made up his excuses later. In 1063 he had conquered the French county of Maine. The reason he gave was that the previous count had promised it to him! William was a man who recycled his excuses. We may be confident in calling his bluff.

A PRESIDENT WITHOUT PRECEDENT?

Donald Trump is a one-off. This is a sentiment so often repeated that it has entered the realms of cliche. But is the cliche rooted in fact? As the 2020 race for the White House gathers pace, **Mark White** considers whether Trump really represents the sharpest of departures from his predecessors in the Oval Office

Hidden ingredients
A silhouette of Donald Trump delivering an address at a rally in Florida, 2019. Pictured within the silhouette are seven former US presidents (from top): Franklin D Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, Ronald Reagan, Herbert Hoover, George W Bush, Richard Nixon and John F Kennedy. It's widely assumed that Trump has little in common with those who went before him. The evidence, argues Mark White, suggests otherwise

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Donald Trump appears to be an American president like no other. He has attacked political opponents with a venom unmatched by his predecessors. His apparent disregard for the truth, such as when refusing to accept photographic evidence that more people attended Barack Obama's inauguration than his own, has shocked many observers. His musings – such as his comment that it would be "interesting" to consider the injection of disinfectant as a treatment for Covid – have sometimes appeared eccentric (even though, in this case, he later claimed that he was being sarcastic).

These are but a few examples of a brand of presidential leadership that appears unique. As one journalist put it a year into the Trump presidency: "Donald Trump was a very different kind of presidential candidate and from the moment he was inaugurated a year ago, it was clear he was going to be a very different kind of president."

But is that true? One of the obligations of the historian is to provide perspective by putting the present in its historical context. So, as we approach the 2020 presidential election, it is important to consider the significance of Trump's time in the White House in terms of the broader sweep of US history. Has he been a president unlike any other? Or is that assertion a lazy cliche?

When attempting to answer these questions, a good place to start is with the policies that Trump has enacted in the core domains of the economy and national defence. During the 2016 presidential campaign, he promised a major tax cut – one that, he claimed, would benefit ordinary working Americans and boost the economy. Once elected, Trump did indeed slash taxes, but in order to secure the bill's passage through Congress he had to ensure that it was wealthy Americans and corporations that benefited most.

"The Tax Cuts are so large and so meaningful," Trump tweeted in 2017. "This is truly a case where the results will speak for themselves, starting very soon. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs!" When the US economy grew in the period before the Coronavirus crisis, it was to his tax policy that Trump would assign the credit.

In the wake of his election victory, Trump also championed a vast military build-up. In response to the economic crash of 2008, and the massive increase in government debt that followed, US military spending had declined. For Trump, this was a sign of the weakening of American power under Barack Obama. So, in his first budget as president, he called for an extra $54bn for the military. The Republican-controlled Congress would ultimately provide him with a total of $700bn, even more money for defence than he requested.

Trump has continued to celebrate this military build-up. "The United States just spent Two Trillion Dollars on Military Equipment," he boasted at the start of 2020. "We are the biggest and by far the BEST in the World! If Iran attacks an American Base, or any American, we will be sending some of that brand new beautiful equipment their way… and without hesitation!"

To cut taxes and increase defence spending at the same time had clear fiscal implications: America's national debt would surely skyrocket. That is precisely what happened. By late 2019, Trump had added $3tn to the national debt, despite promising in 2016 to eliminate that debt within eight years.

Tax cuts, spending hikes

Trump has revelled in his image as a sharp break from what had gone before. Yet in cutting taxes, ordering a huge hike in military spending, and overseeing a large increase in the national debt, he was, in fact, singing from the same hymn sheet as several recent presidents – among them Ronald Reagan. Reagan, who occupied the Oval Office from 1981–89, had changed the very meaning of conservatism. Previous Republican presidents such as Dwight Eisenhower would have been appalled, indeed morally outraged, at the notion of piling up debt for future generations. Reagan, however, both cut taxes and bolstered military spending – with inevitable implications for the national debt.

Two decades later, another Republican, George W Bush, would follow a similar path. But that recipe of military escalation and tax cuts was not confined to conservative presidents. In the early 1960s, John F Kennedy, a Democrat, oversaw what was at the time the largest increase in US military spending in peacetime history, accompanied by the introduction of legislation to cut taxes (which passed after his death). So, in terms of core economic and defence policies at least, Trump's presidency is not so unprecedented as some would have us believe.

Another way in which the 45th president has echoed his antecedents is the manner in which he has sought to communicate his ideas to the American people: direct and unfiltered, above all side-stepping the media whenever possible.

Trump's communication tool of choice is, as everyone knows, Twitter. He began tweeting in 2009, and initially used the platform infrequently. But once he grasped the power of the new social media he began to tweet incessantly. And, before long, he was

The pen and the sword
Trump signs the National Defense Authorization Act for 2018 in the White House. The 45th president has overseen a massive surge in spending on the military – yet, in doing so, he's hardly broken the mould

West coast inquisition
Ronald Reagan meets the press after signing the landmark Tax Reconciliation Bill at his California home, 1981. Slashing taxes was one of Reagan's signature economic policies

THE PRESIDENT'S
$5.2
TRILLION
DEFICIT

A lot of hot air
A balloon broadcasts the size of the deficit under President George W Bush, Washington DC, 2004. Trump, too, has faced criticism for presiding over a huge hike in the national debt

> IN TERMS OF CORE ECONOMIC AND DEFENCE POLICIES, TRUMP'S PRESIDENCY IS NOT SO UNPRECEDENTED AS SOME WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE

Armed to the teeth
John F Kennedy talks with naval officers. His presidency saw what was then the largest growth in military spending in peacetime history

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

using Twitter to mock opponents relentlessly, attacking everyone from “Lightweight Marco Rubio” to “Crooked Hillary” Clinton.

Once in office there was speculation that Trump would stop tweeting, as it might be perceived as gauche and unpresidential. The new president, though, had no intention of relinquishing the tool that had won him the White House. “My use of social media is not Presidential,” he argued, “it’s MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL.” He told British Conservative MP Michael Gove that he thought it was important to continue to communicate with Americans via Twitter because the press was so dishonest in its coverage of him.

At the time of writing, Trump has more than 80 million Twitter followers. What he says to them on a daily basis is unfiltered by critical journalists. Moreover, Trump’s use of social media has allowed him to influence the news cycle on US television networks: he knows that if he sends a controversial tweet then the TV news will inevitably report it. Conservatives have long believed that the traditional media has a pro-Democratic bias; Trump’s torrent of tweets has, in their eyes, enabled him to counteract that bias.

Frequently shocking

While the content of Trump’s tweets is frequently shocking – for example, telling a group of liberal Democratic Congresswomen (all but one of whom were born in the United States) to “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came” – the rationale behind his use of Twitter does have presidential precedent. One such precedent can be found in the figure of Franklin Roosevelt, who sought to circumvent the press in the 1930s by addressing the people via radio. At the time of the Great Depression, Roosevelt used his ‘fireside chats’ to explain his New Deal policies to Americans as they sat in their living rooms.

John F Kennedy, too, side-stepped the media by employing televised press conferences. As he had used television so effectively in the 1960 presidential campaign – most famously in his television debates with Republican candidate Richard Nixon – his press secretary proposed that, as president, he hold live televised news conferences. Many journalists were appalled at the idea, believing that it would marginalise them. When journalist friend Ben Bradlee praised Kennedy in December 1962 for a successful television interview, JFK remarked: “Well, I always said that when we don’t have to go through you bastards, we can really get our story over to the American people.” Those words could easily have been spoken by Donald Trump.

For many observers, it has been Trump’s abrasive style that has truly set him apart

NBC
CBS
NBC
NBC
ABC

Live and direct Franklin D Roosevelt pictured during one of his ‘fireside chats’ – which enabled him to talk to the American people while circumventing the press – in 1935

Without filter JFK addresses Americans via a live TV and radio broadcast, 1961. “Well, I always said that when we don’t have to go through you bastards, we can really get our story over,” he told a journalist

Donald J. Trump

A Twitter tirade Trump has tweeted voraciously during his presidency, concluding that the platform is the best way to side-step what he believes to be a biased media establishment

JOSEPH MCCARTHY PRACTISED POLITICS BY ATTACK, POLITICS BY INSULT, AN APPROACH SIMILAR TO THAT EMPLOYED BY TRUMP

A word in your ear Senator Joseph McCarthy (left) pictured in 1953 with Roy Cohn, the combative lawyer who would play a key role in Trump’s rise to prominence in New York

GETTY IMAGES

from other presidents. His four years in power have been punctuated by a string of vicious, arguably shameless barbs launched at his detractors. In fact, these attacks predate his time in the Oval Office. When the singer Cher ridiculed him in 2012 for wearing a toupee and harbouring racist sentiments, Trump tweeted: "I don't wear a 'rug' – it's mine. And I promise not to talk about your massive plastic surgeries that didn't work."

Once in the White House, Trump continued in the same pugilistic vein. He described TV presenter Mika Brzezinski, whose show had been critical of his presidency, as "low I.Q. Crazy Mika". Of Omarosa Manigault Newman, a senior black adviser fired in late 2017, Trump tweeted: "When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn't work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!"

Ludicrous attacks

As these examples demonstrate, Trump has ramped up the rhetoric to dizzying new heights (or lows). Among American presidents, his rhetorical vitriol has been unprecedented. But he is hardly the first US political figure to bad-mouth his opponents.

While the Republican senator Joseph McCarthy will always be associated with the Red Scare of the early 1950s, it was President Harry Truman who originally ordered an investigation into the loyalty of those working for the US government. Taking his cue from the president, McCarthy delivered a speech in February 1950 in which he alleged that there were 57 communist spies in the US government. He ludicrously attacked Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who had done much to build the whole postwar foreign policy of containing communist expansion overseas, as "a pompous diplomat in striped pants". He even trained his sights on the great wartime general George Marshall for "advocating timidity as a policy so as not to annoy the forces of Soviet imperialism in Asia" and being part of a "great conspiracy".

From evidence released in the 1990s, we know that Moscow *was* trying to infiltrate the US government, but nevertheless, as Acheson once put it, McCarthy was "essentially a small-town bully". It was politics by attack, politics by insult. And it was strikingly similar to the approach adopted by Trump.

There is, moreover, an important connection between McCarthy and Trump, in the form of abrasive New York lawyer Roy Cohn. Cohn had been a close aide to McCarthy and when, in 1973, the US government sued Trump and his father for racist practices in renting out their apartments, Trump asked Cohn for his advice. Cohn told him to hit

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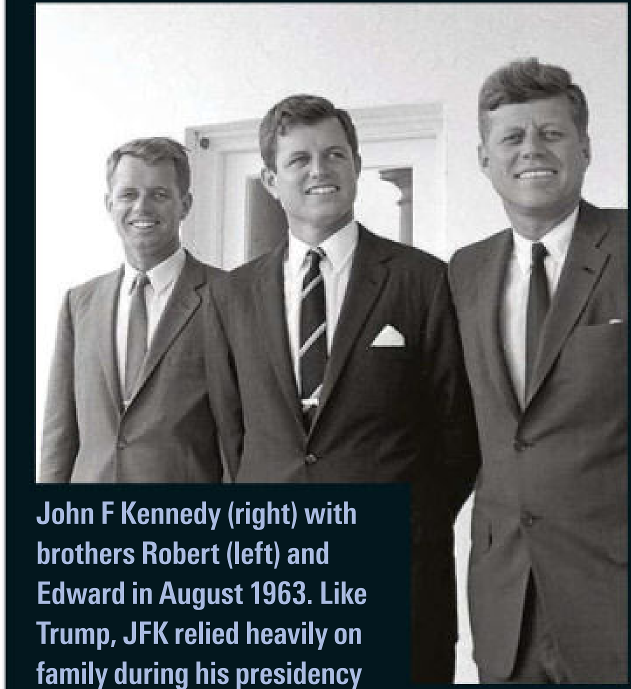
GROUNDHOG DAY IN THE WHITE HOUSE

How Donald Trump echoes three of his predecessors



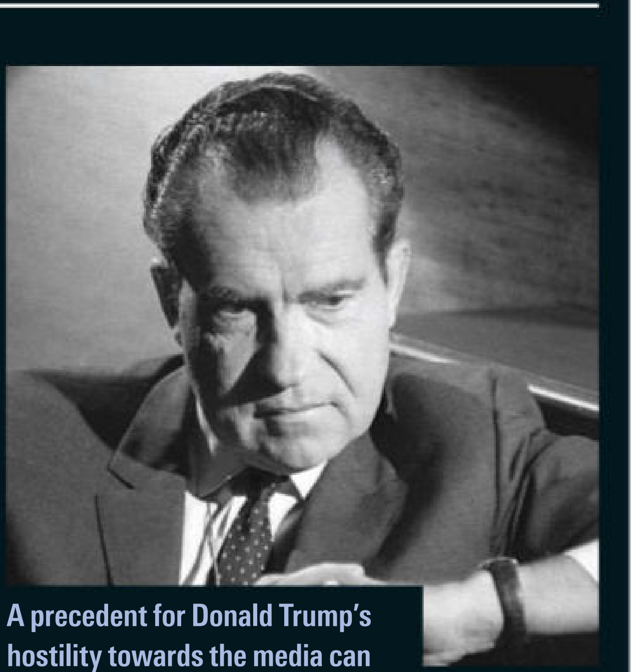
John F Kennedy (right) with brothers Robert (left) and Edward in August 1963. Like Trump, JFK relied heavily on family during his presidency

John F Kennedy (president from 1961–63)

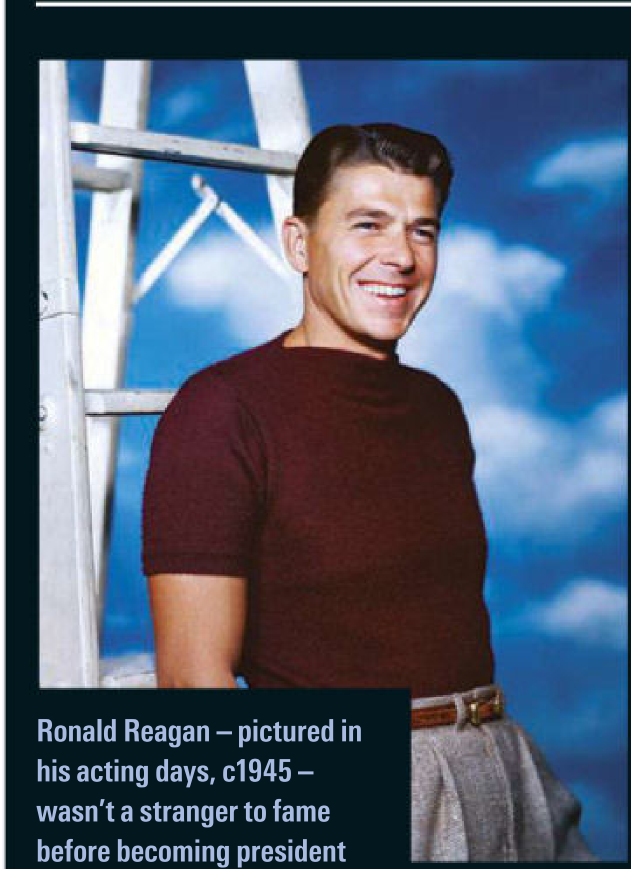
As president, John F Kennedy relied heavily on his family – and so does Donald Trump. Trump made his daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner key aides; JFK's brother Robert was attorney general and his most influential adviser. Both men's notoriously turbulent private lives have generated a blizzard of headlines – though, in Kennedy's case, those wouldn't appear until after his death. Both authorised substantial military build-ups and supported large tax cuts.

Richard Nixon (1969–74)

Nixon believed himself to be under siege from the press – much as Trump does now. Trump uses Twitter to attack journalists, while Nixon instructed his vice president, Spiro Agnew, to give speeches criticising the media. Against the backdrop of the social upheavals of the 1960s, Nixon called for "law and order" to win support from what he called the "great silent majority" of Americans. As protests swept through America following the police killing of George Floyd, Trump tweeted: "LAW & ORDER!" He may well make that a key part of his 2020 presidential campaign.



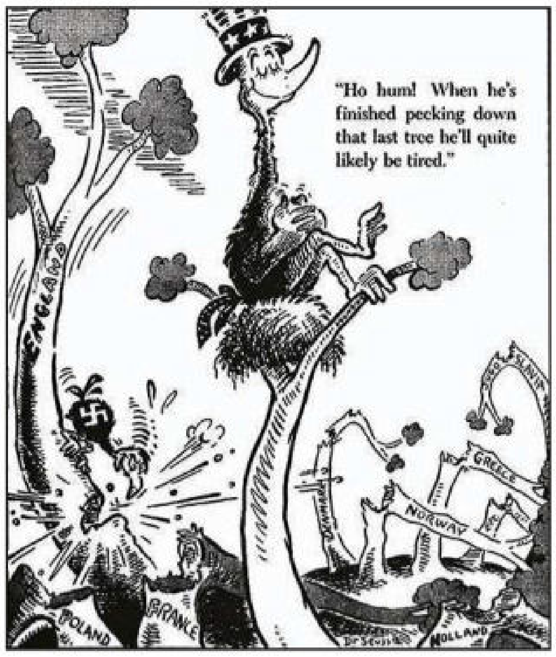
A precedent for Donald Trump's hostility towards the media can be found in the presidency of Richard Nixon, pictured in 1968



Ronald Reagan – pictured in his acting days, c1945 – wasn't a stranger to fame before becoming president

Ronald Reagan (1981–89)

Reagan cut taxes, bolstered military spending and massively increased the national debt. The similarities between him and Trump don't end there. Both men were well known to millions of Americans before they entered the White House: Trump as the host of the TV show *The Apprentice*, while Reagan had also been in show business as a Hollywood actor. One other factor in common is their ability to win support from working-class Americans who traditionally voted for the Democratic Party (known as Reagan Democrats in the 1980s). This was a crucial factor in Trump's victory in the 2016 election.


"Ho hum! When he's finished pecking down that last tree he'll quite likely be tired."
ENGLAND
GREECE
NORWAY
POLAND
FRANCE
HOLLAND
Dr SEUSS

Sitting it out A cartoon from May 1941 mocks American isolationists, who opposed going to war with Nazi Germany. Trump's world view is very much defined by nationalism rather than internationalism

Show of force Militia members at a demonstration in Charlottesville, August 2017. Trump initially refused to condemn white supremacists in the wake of a far-right rally in the Virginia city

THERE IS ONE RESPECT IN WHICH TRUMP HAS BEEN DIFFERENT FROM OTHER MODERN PRESIDENTS: HIS FREQUENTLY INSENSITIVE APPROACH TO RACE

back hard by suing the Justice Department for $100m for defamation. In the end Trump settled with the US government but without having to admit any culpability. Thereafter McCarthy's sidekick was a mentor to Trump, helping him to handle the power brokers of New York City as he built his property empire. Cohn said Trump would sometimes call him 15–20 times a day. "All I can tell you [about Cohn]," Trump said to a journalist in 1980, "is he's been vicious to others in his protection of me."

Isolationist America

There is another feature of Trump's tenure in the White House that has often been described as quite unlike that of any modern president, namely his nationalist rather than internationalist vision for America's role on the world stage. During the 2016 campaign, Trump vowed to withdraw from free-trade agreements that (he said) had benefited other countries while destroying high-quality blue-collar jobs at home. He also infamously pledged to build a wall on the southern border to prevent illegal immigration from Mexico, and to redefine the relationship with Nato allies who needed to contribute more to the costs of western defence. "From this day forward a new vision will govern our land," he declared during his inaugural address as president on 20 January 2017. "From this moment on, it's going to be America First."

At times Trump has played an internationalist role on the world stage, whether engaging with Vladimir Putin's Russia or both threatening and negotiating with communist North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme. On the other hand, he has withdrawn the United States from the Paris climate change agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade agreement. He has also strained every sinew to overturn the deal crafted by Obama by which Iran curbed its nuclear weapons programme in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, and has imposed tariffs on Chinese imports.

It's an approach that contrasts sharply with that adopted by the likes of Barack Obama, who negotiated the aforementioned Paris climate agreement and Iran nuclear deal, and Bill Clinton, who signed a raft of trade agreements with other countries. But, again, it's not without precedent. In fact, it is reminiscent of the 1920s and 30s, when many Americans adopted an isolationist outlook on world affairs in response to the First World War and the looming prospect of a Second. And this was not just a question of public opinion. In the 1930s Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts designed to keep the US out of any future conflict. Again, Trump has proved less anomalous than many might think, although the nationalist emphasis is unique in the postwar period.

There is one respect, however, in which Trump *has* been troublingly different from other presidents who have been in office since the civil rights movement: his often insensitive approach to race. This can be traced back to his association with the Birther movement during Barack Obama's presidency, when he claimed that his predecessor in the White House had not been born in America and was not therefore a legitimate president.

When, a few months into his presidency, a confrontation took place in August 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, between Black Lives Matter protesters and a group containing Nazi/Klan supporters, Trump refused to make any moral distinction between the two – saying the white nationalists included "some very fine people".

Three years later, following the widespread protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd by a white police officer, Trump's rhetoric inflamed what was already a white-hot situation. "When the looting starts, the shooting starts," he tweeted, threatening police reprisals. Twitter felt compelled to add a notice to the tweet, warning that it glorified violence. Following public and political outrage, Trump qualified what he had said. But that phrase was controversial as it had originally been used by a Miami police chief in 1967 in a racially inflammatory manner.

The assertions that Donald Trump is a president without precedent are often wide of the mark. But it's hard to deny that, in the case of race relations, they are, sadly, right. H

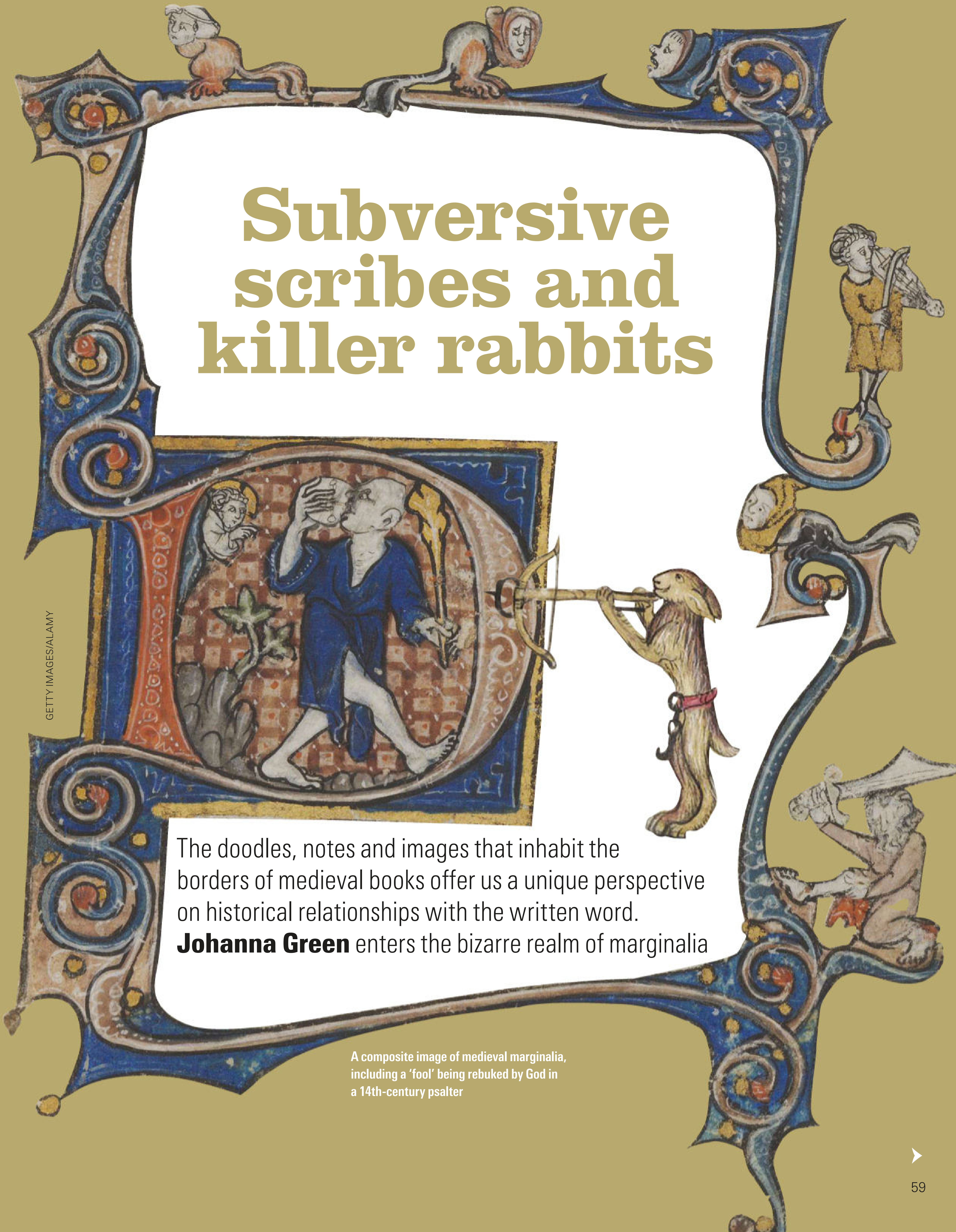
Mark White is professor of history at Queen Mary University of London. He is co-editor of *The Presidential Image: A History from Theodore Roosevelt to Donald Trump* (IB Tauris, 2020)

ALAMY/REUTERS

WATCH To watch **Trump in Tweets**, a BBC Three programme about how Trump's Twitter usage has transformed US politics, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08hsxd5*

Subversive scribes and killer rabbits

The doodles, notes and images that inhabit the borders of medieval books offer us a unique perspective on historical relationships with the written word. **Johanna Green** enters the bizarre realm of marginalia



A composite image of medieval marginalia, including a 'fool' being rebuked by God in a 14th-century psalter

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How many of you would own up to writing in your books?

It's a divisive issue. For some, the idea is horrifying. For others, it is an everyday part of reading. Whatever your view, each time you open a book, you leave behind evidence of you, the user: a note in the margin, a thumbprint on the cover, a folded corner acting as a bookmark, or perhaps even a crinkled edge or two from having read it in the bath.

Books live lives. They amass a biography as they pass through the hands of their creators and readers. And that's every bit as true of medieval texts as it is of the thrillers, the fantasies and the romances (not to mention the history books) we read today.

In the case of medieval books, this lived biography can be traced through the strange assortment of doodles, notes, annotations and illustrations – things that we now call 'marginalia' – that inhabit the edges of these precious manuscripts.

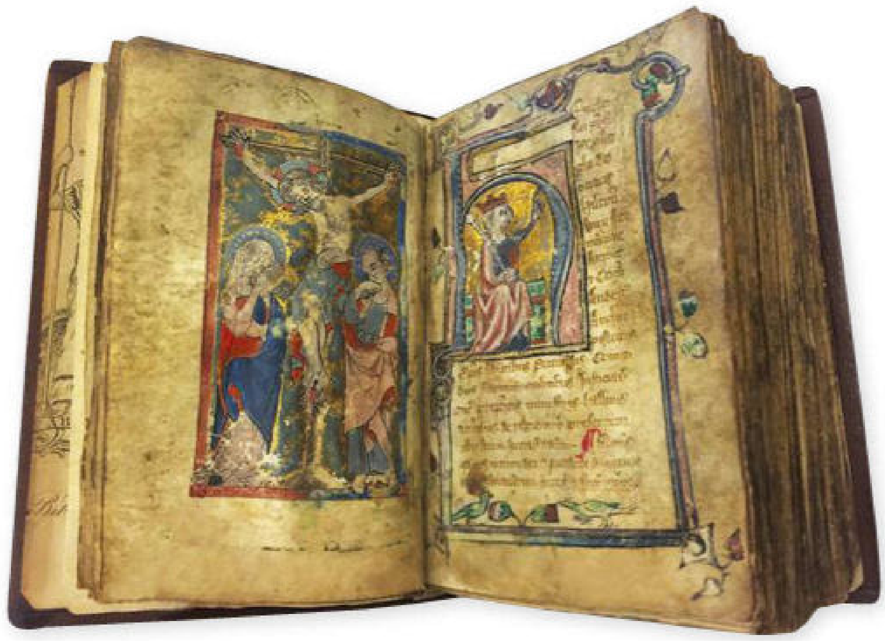
Medieval marginalia takes many forms. It may consist of decorative schemes designed to embellish the prose. It may be tiny illustrations whose function is to lead readers to particular segments of text. It may be a child's playful scribbles.

Marginalia was sometimes added by the original manuscript creators themselves. But, just as often, it was the handiwork of readers – decades, even centuries, after the book's creation. What the creators and readers . left there was both strange and enlightening: killer rabbits, animal-human hybrids, small figures lassoing chunks of text.

These additions may live life in the margins but, as the following examples prove, they play a key role in our interpretation of medieval books – not only in our understanding of their authors, but also the generations of readers who opened the books long after their creators were dead.

From the sublime to the ridiculous

Marginalia was used to both praise God and subvert the natural order



The illumination of the crucifixion shown above in the 14th-century legal text *Statutes of the Realm* aimed to demonstrate the unity of church and state

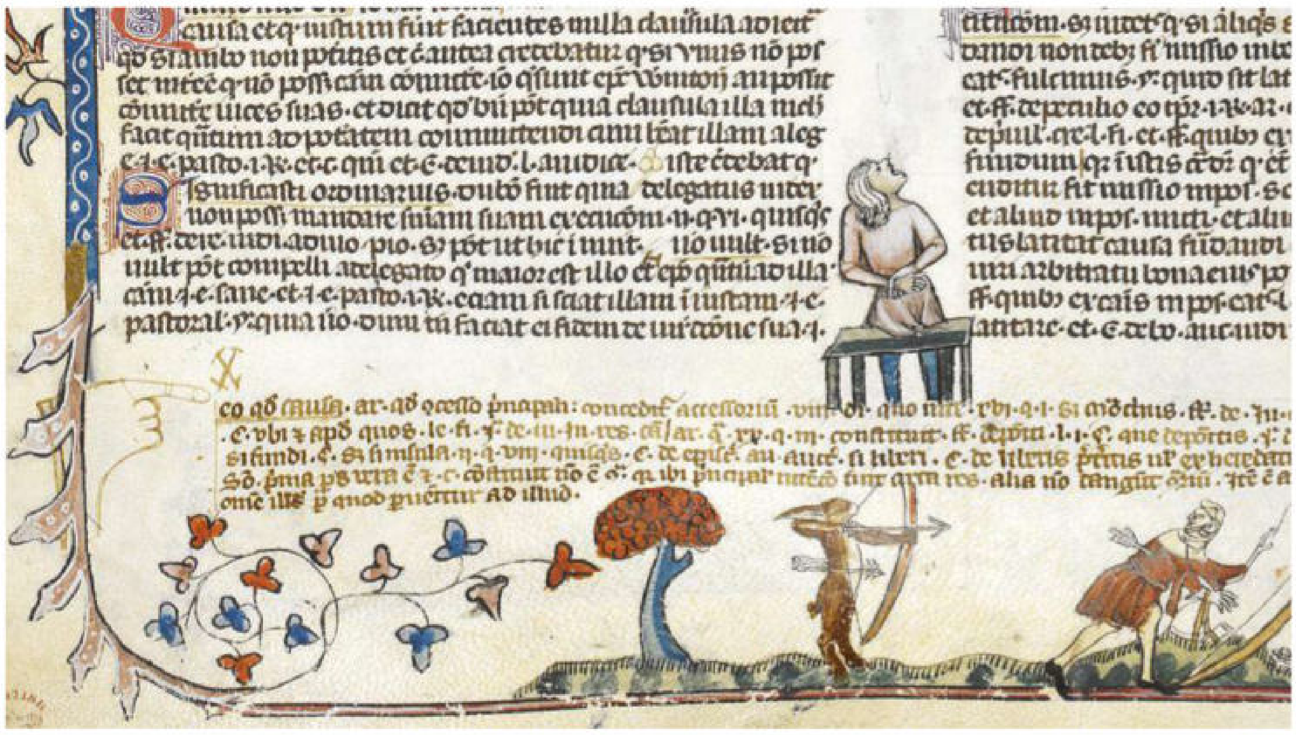
The format most commonly associated with the term 'marginalia' is, perhaps, the manuscript illumination. Illumination, from the Latin 'illuminare' (meaning to 'enlighten' or 'illuminate'), refers to the decoration of a manuscript with colour, including gold and silver leaf. This form of decoration, designed as part of a book's original scheme, surrounds the text block with any combination of decorated initials, as well as border design including marginal figures and scenes. As such, it gave rise to many of the marginal characters with which historians are most familiar today.

Our first example (above right) shows these elements of decoration in a 14th-century legal text entitled *Statutes of the Realm*, designed for use by an itinerant lawyer. The full-page miniature depicts the crucifixion opposite a decorated initial of an enthroned king, an embellished border and a lower marginal illustration of two birds. It's a sumptuous example of a biblical scene working in conjunction with a legal text, demonstrating the conjunction between church and state. The manuscript was small enough to be carried around, and its condition reflects daily use.

Not all manuscript illuminations were as earnest as the one above. Today, perhaps the most well-known medieval decoration is the *drollery*, which depicts humorous scenes, many of a 'monde renversé', or a 'world upside-down', which could include human, animal and hybrid figures known as grotesques.

Among some of the most popular of these marginal figures (particularly from the 13th–15th centuries) was the rabbit, who was traditionally depicted in medieval art as a symbol of purity, innocence and fertility. In the example below, however, rabbits are deployed to subvert the usual order of things for comedic effect, with scribes using the marginal space to play with and question ideas about society. Here, these fluffy little animals are shown in a position of power: the hunter, not the hunted.

Rabbits exact revenge on hunters in the *Smithfield Decretals*. Marginalia was often used to portray a world turned upside down



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Helping hands and feathered friends

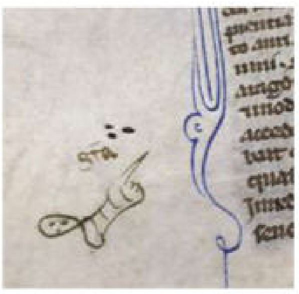
In an age before highlighters and marker pens, authors used comic illustrations and wordplay to alert readers to key pieces of text

Marginalia wasn't only employed to make manuscripts look beautiful, express religious devotion or indulge in a little irreverence. It also had more functional purposes, such as acting as memory aids.

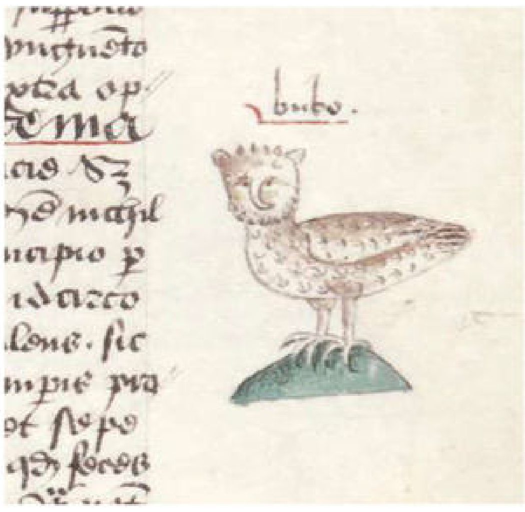
Today, we might use a highlighter pen to draw attention to a key piece of text. Back in the Middle Ages, however, the indicator of choice was something called the manicule. Taken from the Latin for 'little hand', the manicule was what can only be described as a disembodied pointing finger. In the image of a tiny 13th-century Bible (above right), we can see our reader has decorated theirs with a rather fetching cuff. Given the diminutive wording (these lines are less than 5mm tall), this becuffed hand would have proved particularly useful.

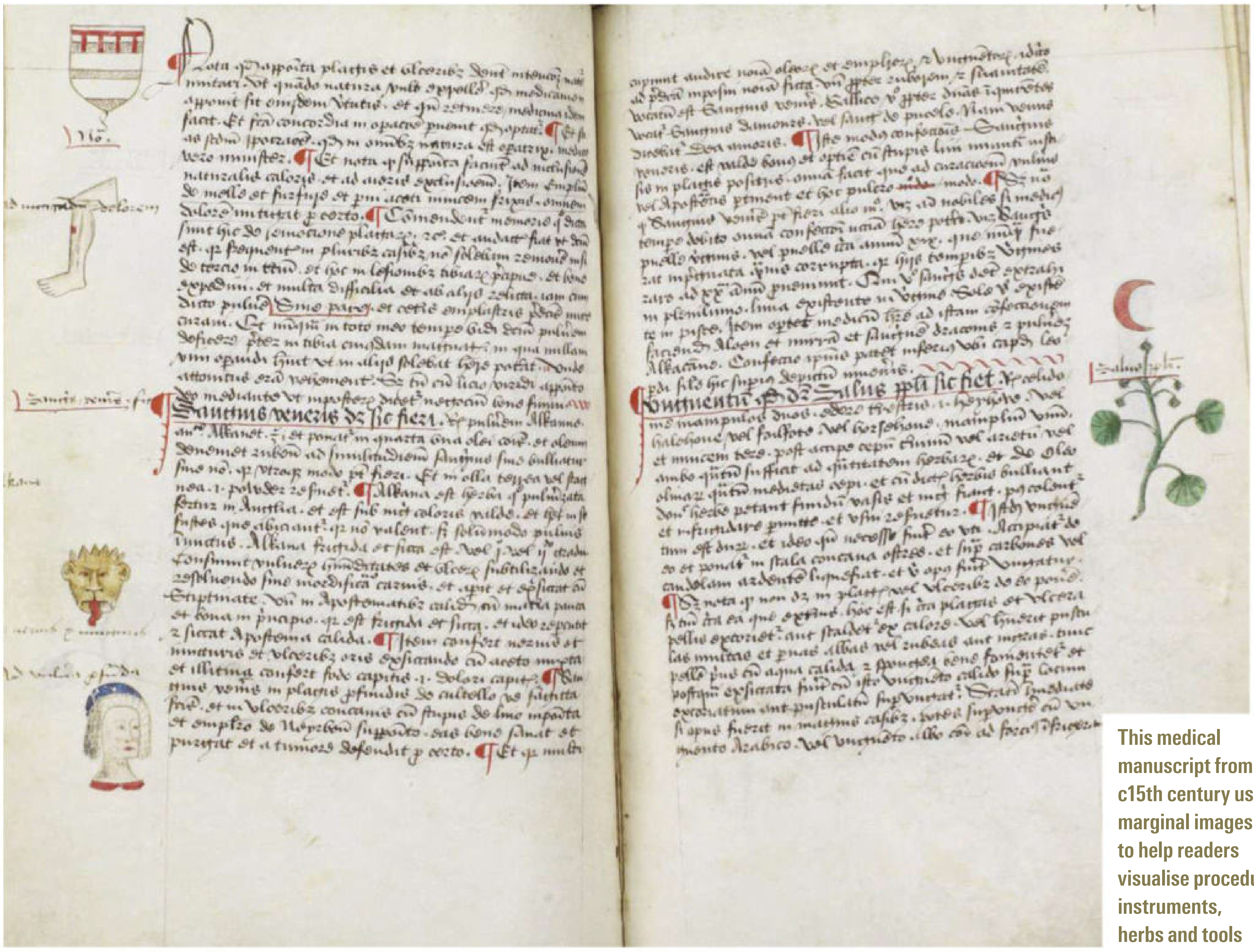
A pointing hand is an obvious choice of highlighter. Some scribes, however, chose to be a little more playful – like the creator of John of Arderne's 'Medical Treatises', shown below right and bottom. In this manuscript, offering insights into the practice of surgery in the medieval period, marginal images helped the readers visualise procedures, instruments and herbs. The marginal scheme remained largely unchanged across different copies of his texts, and even when it was translated from Latin into English.

As with manicules, the marginalia directed readers to particular pieces of text – with the help of a series of visual jokes and wordplay. In the image right, an owl indicates a discussion of cancer of the rectum, whose symptoms included a swelling known as a 'bubo'. Why an owl? Because the Latin word for owl was also 'bubo'. If the reader needed to locate this section quickly, they simply had to search for this feathered 'bubo' in the margins.



LEFT: **Manicules (Latin for 'little hands') were used to point readers in the right direction** BELOW: **This owl is perched next to a description of the symptoms of cancer of the rectum**





This medical manuscript from the c15th century used marginal images to help readers visualise procedures, instruments, herbs and tools

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The beauty of blunders

Some of the most fascinating examples of marginalia were inspired by attempts to correct scribes' errors

Medieval scribes made mistakes. They misspelled words, they repeated themselves, they forgot to include entire paragraphs. That's where another form of marginalia – the 'gloss' – came into its own. Glosses were added by later users to correct errors or even translate text.

The three images right (taken from a 10th or 11th-century version of Pope Gregory I's *Pastoral Care*) show the gloss work of one of the best-known of all medieval scribes: the Tremulous Hand of Worcester, so-named for their shaky handwriting.

The Tremulous Hand's edits and annotations – visible on numerous manuscripts – are unmistakable. They are also intriguing. What condition, historians asked themselves, was this prolific scribe suffering from? The answer was provided in 2015 by Deborah Thorpe and Jane Alty, who combined neurological studies with handwriting analysis to conclude that the Tremulous Hand had an 'essential tremor' (a type of uncontrollable shake or tremble of part of the body). Thanks to Thorpe and Alty's research, we now know a lot more about the life of a 13th-century scribe, and the history of the condition from which they suffered.

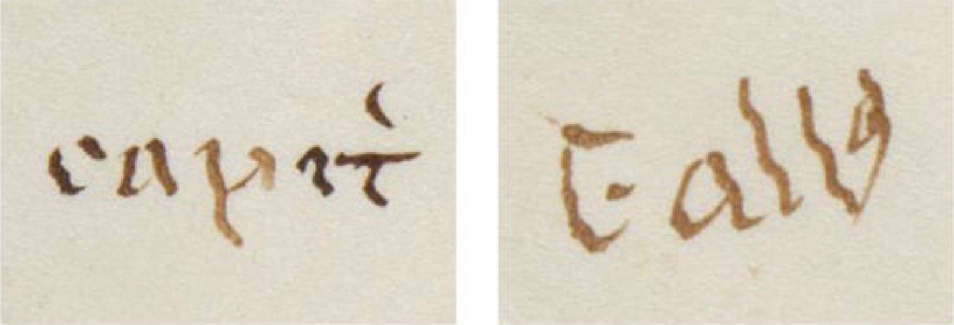
Gloss work often involved one scribe editing another's text. But it could also see scribes correcting their own work – and, as the image below right proves, they often did so with no little imagination and humour.

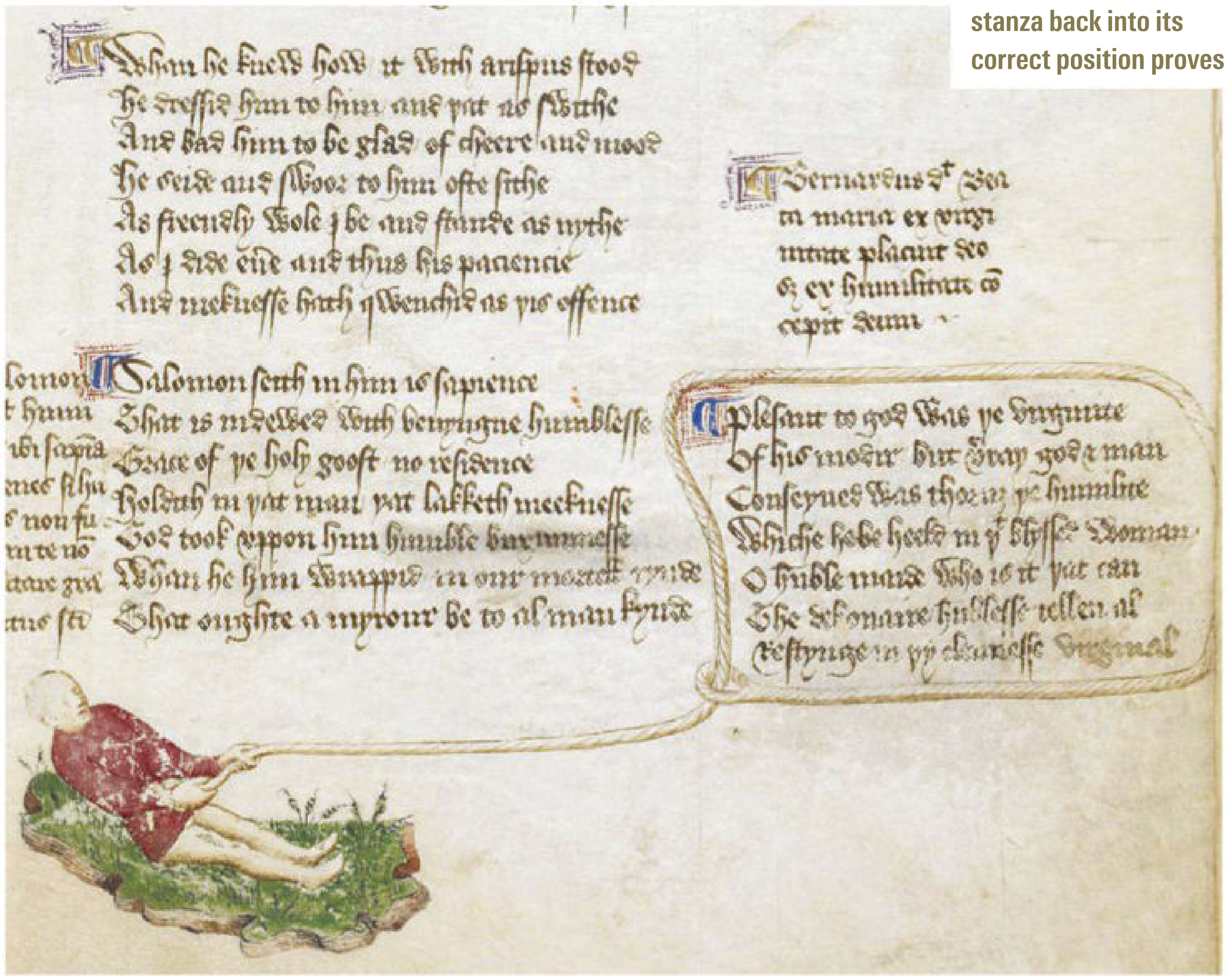
The image shows a section of Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes*, written in the early 15th century. Scribes would have been tasked with painstakingly copying the text to parchment. But there's a problem: a stanza of text has accidentally been omitted during the copying process.

The scribes, as the image shows, have corrected themselves by adding the missing stanza in the blank space of the right-hand margin. But what is striking about the correction is the decoration produced to accompany this error: the limner (the painter of portraits and miniatures) has added a man beside the stanza, and depicted him lassoing the stanza back into its correct position. Similarly, in the Book of Hours shown full page, far right, marginal figures and maniculae work together to drag a missing line into its rightful place.

Both of these examples suggest that, rather than attempt to cover up their mistakes, medieval scribes were often happy to highlight them and the effort they had to take to put them right.

LEFT: **This 10th or 11th-century version of Gregory I's *Pastoral Care* is adorned with the Tremulous Hand of Worcester's unmistakable corrections (below), added some two centuries later**





Medieval authors often turned their text corrections into mini artworks – as this 15th-century image of a man lassoing a stanza back into its correct position proves

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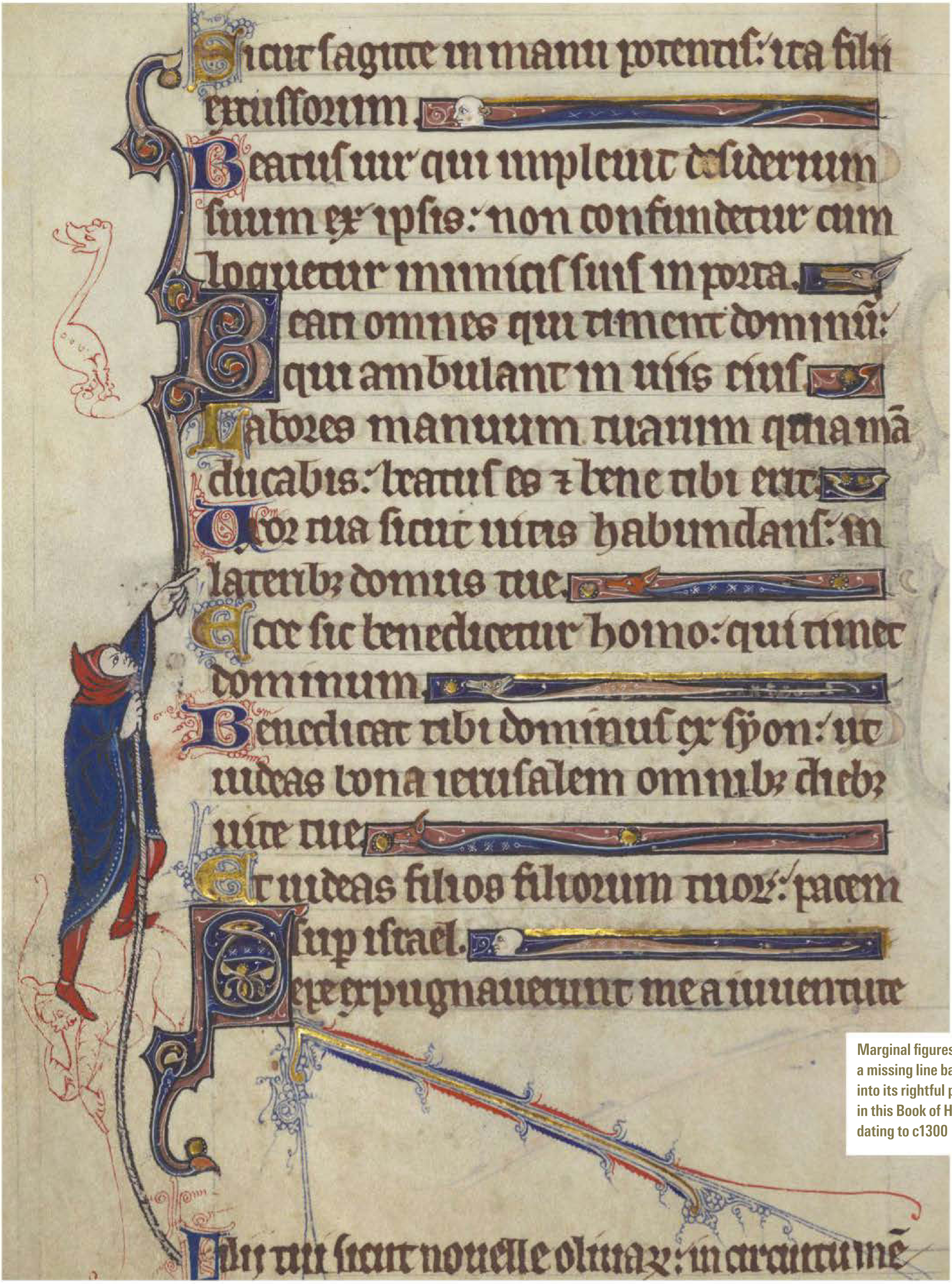

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Marginal figures drag a missing line back into its rightful place in this Book of Hours dating to c1300

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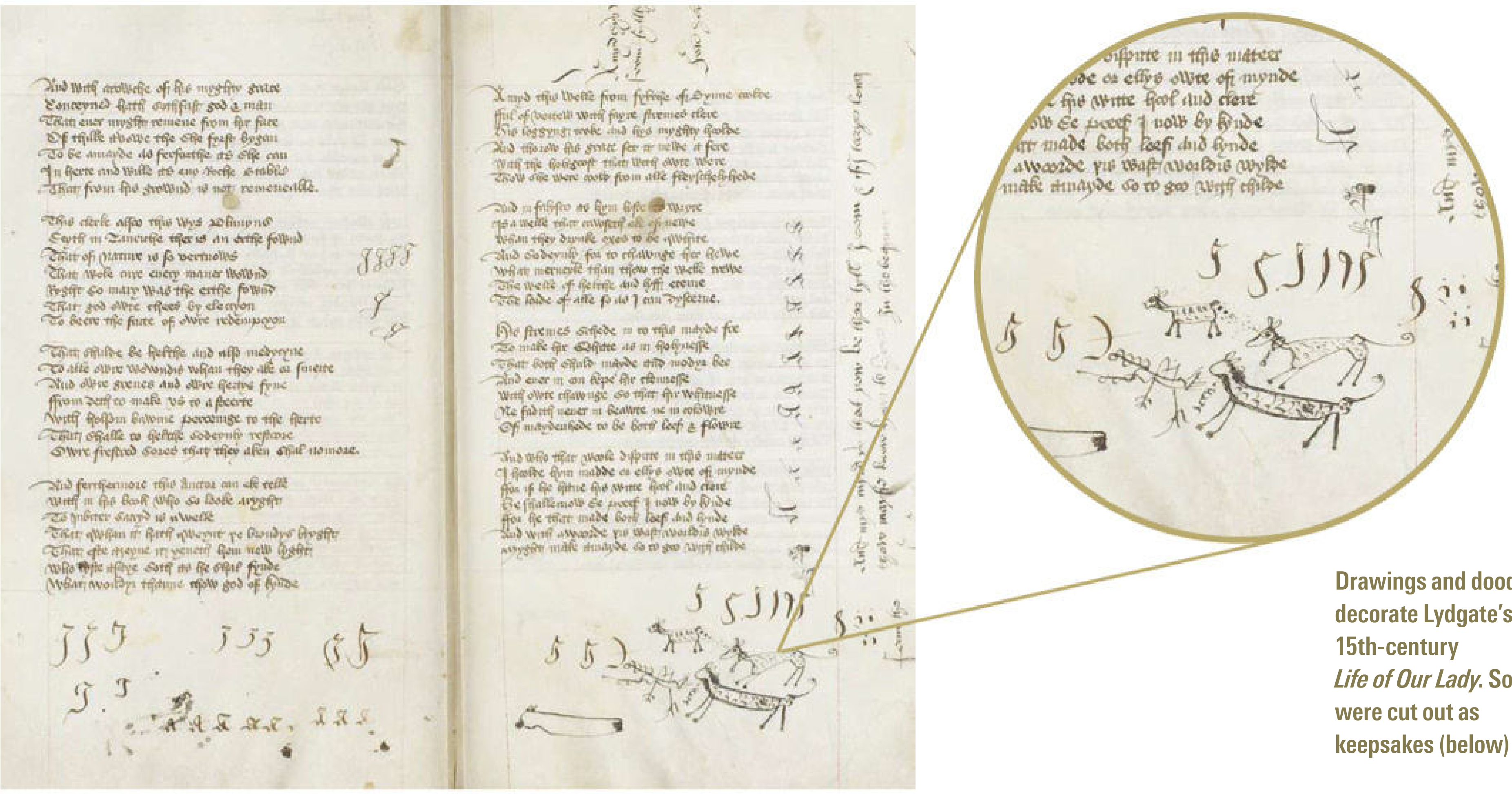


Drawings and doodles decorate Lydgate's 15th-century *Life of Our Lady*. Some were cut out as keepsakes (below)

Living happily ever after

Children's doodles and the muddy scrawl of chickens suggest that some medieval books enjoyed long and colourful afterlives

Some medieval tomes were filed away soon after their completion, rarely to see the light of day. Others became one of the family. The 15th-century manuscript copy of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady* shown above certainly falls into the latter category. It is a fantastic example of how generations of owners engaged with their books in ways we might now find surprising. Almost every page is embellished with a series of pen trials, annotations, and wonderful marginal doodles, all added in the 16th century. Some of them may have been drawn by children.

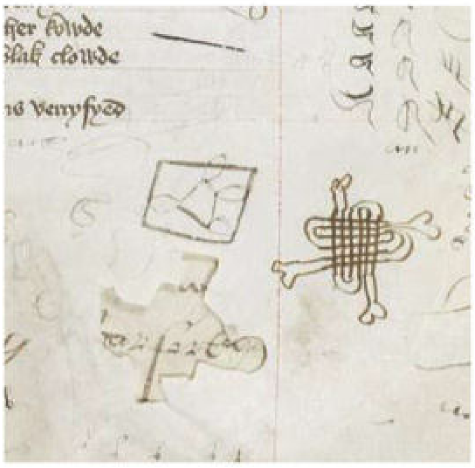
While at first glance you might conclude that the manuscript had been defaced by these users (members of the Golding family of Essex, named throughout in the annotations), closer inspection reveals these hands have been respectful of the text, almost as if they were using the blank margins as scrap parchment. In a number of places, the artist has enjoyed their handiwork so much they have cut out their doodles as a keepsake (see above right).

What is striking about these marginal drawings is their sheer volume and their playfulness. And while they might suggest that the book was not being closely read in its later life, it does imply it was still in active use within the household. The doodles' presence in the margins demonstrates how this family made use of materials available to them and provides insight into the shifting value of this book – from a text to be read, to a material object to be used. What's more, this manuscript was clearly not kept out of reach in a library but was well within the grasp of younger family members.

Finally, no discussion of such unexpected users would be complete without mentioning the animal prints found on the pages of manuscripts and rare books. Across a 1537 copy of 'Matthew's Bible' (shown below right) is strewn a series of brown v-shaped prints, brought to light by University of Glasgow student Isla MacFarlane in 2016. Just as with our Lydgate manuscript, this evidence points less to active reading, and more to *where* a book may have been used. After careful scrutiny of the size and shape of the prints by the book history community, it appears that, in this book's life at least, chickens also had reading rights. ■

Johanna Green is a lecturer in information studies at the University of Glasgow. She specialises in book history and digital humanities

LISTEN To listen to **Knight Fights Giant Snail**, a BBC Radio 4 documentary on marginalia, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000jgfv*



This 1537 version of 'Matthew's Bible' appears to have attracted the attention of chickens

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ILLUSTRATION BY **DÓRA KISTELEKI**

HOW POTATOES CONQUERED THE WORLD

Five centuries ago they were grown only in a slither of South America. Now they're on the menu in virtually every country on Earth. **Rebecca Earle** reveals how a combination of colonialism, industrialisation and food insecurity propelled the once lowly spud to global domination

We don't think of potatoes as exotic. Quite the opposite; they are utterly familiar. When the artist Subodh Gupta was growing up in 1970s India, he wondered whether everyone ate potatoes, or if it was only people in Bihar. A French traveller visiting Colombia in the early 19th century was surprised to see 'European' potatoes sold alongside South American vegetables such as cassava.

For an Indian boy, potatoes are Indian. For a Frenchman, they are European. This is pretty remarkable for a food unknown to most of humanity before the 16th century. Until then the only people who ate potatoes lived along the spine of mountains that runs from the Andes in Bolivia and Chile north through the Rockies. This 'American cordillera', as it's called, is the origin of potatoes.

In fact, no one else had laid eyes on a potato before Spanish conquistadors invaded South America in the 1530s and overthrew the Inca empire. That set in motion a whirlwind that blew potatoes to India, France and beyond. This makes it all the more extraordinary just how ordinary potatoes are these days. Their very names proclaim their rootedness in the right-here, in exactly wherever we are: Ayrshire new potatoes, Idaho russet, Irish cobbler, Darjeeling red round.

Even the Incas viewed the potato as pretty ordinary. An Andean legend from long before the Spanish arrived tells of the 'Baked Potato Gleaner', a mythical beggar who encapsulated the tuber's underdog status.

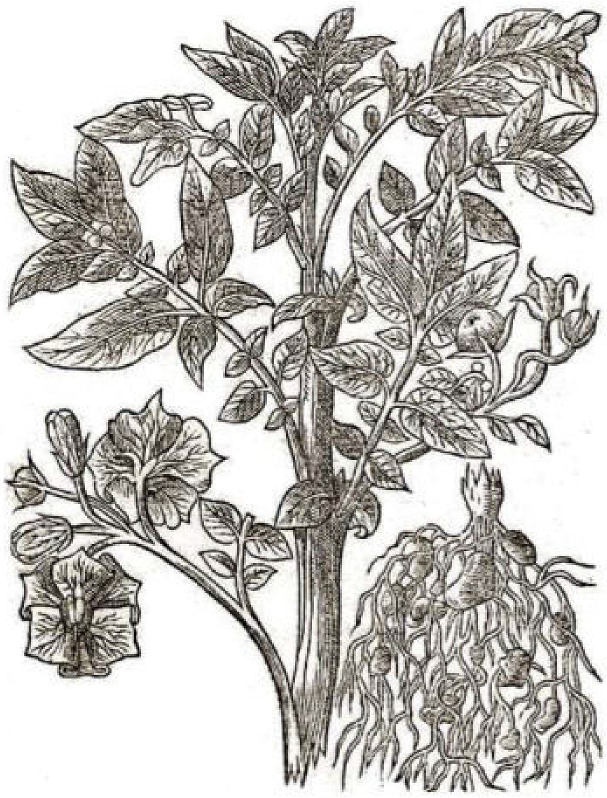
In Peru the potato had long been a staple, eaten alongside maize, quinoa and a multitude of other vegetables. The growing of maize was important to the Inca state, in part because corn was the key ingredient for the *aqha* (maize beer) that lubricated many official events. The Inca himself participated every year in a symbolic maize-planting ceremony, to the accompaniment of music and song, and similar state-level festivities marked the maize harvest. In the sacred fields around the Inca capital, Cuzco, small gold and silver replica cornstalks (like the one shown, left, dating to the 15th or 16th century) were interspersed among the growing maize, to 'encourage' it.

No such imperial oversight was bestowed on potatoes, which were considered a lowly food, necessary

GETTY IMAGES

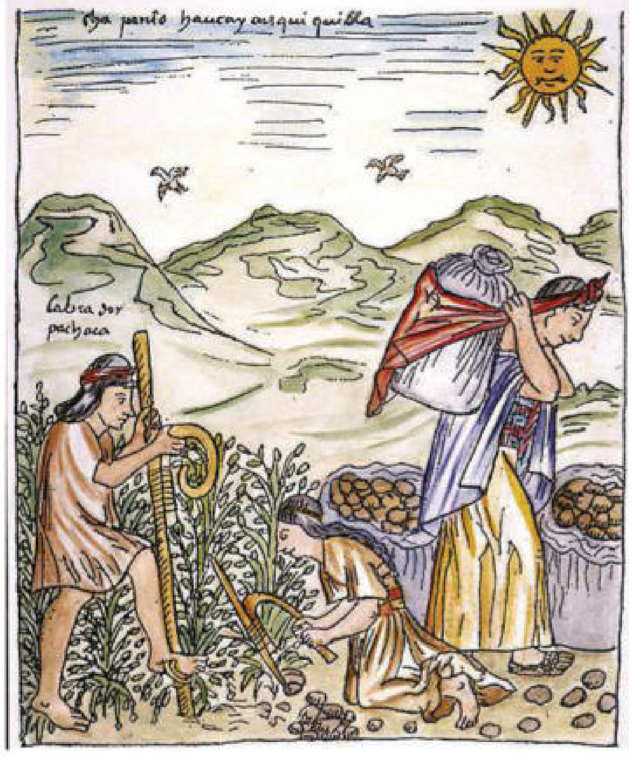
but banal. Cultivated at village level, they were traded and consumed within more local orbits, their growth fostered by smaller rituals outside the orbit of the Inca state. One account from 16th-century Peru describes the local festivities that marked the inauguration of the planting season in the mountain village of Lampa. Local dignitaries seated themselves on carpets to watch the proceedings. A procession of richly attired attendants accompanied the seed potatoes, which were carried by six men making music on drums. Events culminated with the sacrifice of a particularly beautiful llama, whose blood was immediately sprinkled on the potatoes.

Potatoes remained an important resource for Andean villagers in subsequent centuries. The 80-year-old Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, descendant of Quechua noblemen, drew a picture (below right) of a village potato harvest in the early 17th century. His line drawing showed villagers hard at work unearthing and transporting the crop.



Growing influence

A potato plant depicted by the English botanist John Gerarde in the 1590s. By now, the crop's appeal had spread far beyond its South American home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Fruits of the earth

Andeans farm potatoes, as shown in a 17th-century codex. Until the conquistadors arrived in the 1530s, no one outside the Americas had set eyes on the crop

The spud goes global

The same forces that brought the conquistador Francisco Pizarro and his soldiers to Peru subsequently propelled the potato around the world. From the 16th century, colonialism, warfare and expanding networks of trade set people and objects in motion in unprecedented ways. The potato was caught up in this global flux. Today, according to the United Nations, it is grown in virtually every country, and is the world's fourth most important food crop.

The skilled task of adapting the potato to the varied growing conditions it encountered in northern Italy, Bengal or upstate New York was undertaken largely by the anonymous small farmers who grew the new plant in garden plots, and doubtless appreciated the potato's prolific yield and nutritious content. While a hectare of land sown with wheat may yield enough protein to feed seven people over the course of a year, a hectare of potatoes will nourish 17. Only soybeans produce more protein per hectare, among the major crops.

Potatoes also require less water than other crops, and grow in a great variety of climatic conditions, including on poor soil. The potato is thus an excellent tool in efforts to reduce hunger and food insecurity. This is why the United Nations named 2008 'The International Year of the Potato'. Ordinary people doubtless also appreciated the fact that tax collectors were slow to notice the new arrival, and so for many years potatoes did not attract the same tithes and other agricultural taxes levied on more familiar crops.

The potato's integration into everyday eating practices around the world did not however result solely from the colonial, military and mercantile forces that provided the means for the plant to reach new destinations. Local contexts also shaped its reception.

In the 18th century, as expanding industry increased the need for robust workers, the nutritious potato gained a new allure

In New Zealand, where European sailors had planted potatoes in the 1770s, the tubers were quickly adopted into Maori agriculture both as a foodstuff and as a commodity. As a foodstuff they supplemented the local staple of sweet potatoes. Unlike sweet potatoes, which were embedded in a pre-existing web of ritual restrictions on cultivation, potatoes were free of such prohibitions and so could be grown in a wider range of circumstances. The historian Hazel Petrie has suggested that, for this reason, potatoes were a popular addition to village agriculture and quickly became an important food, consumed in huge quantities at the *hui*, or festive gatherings, that punctuated Maori life.

They also acquired an economic importance. Together with pigs, potatoes were used as a currency when trading with Europeans for muskets and other iron goods. By the early 19th century, Maori farmers were growing the plant on a large commercial scale specifically for this trade. "Potatoes and pork, pork and potatoes wherever we went. I began to get tired of pork and potatoes," complained one English writer during an 1830s visit to the islands.

European voyages of exploration and colonisation brought the potato to New Zealand but its entry into Maori life resulted from Maoris' active management of the trading and diplomatic opportunities it enabled, as well as their technical skill in adapting it to the local agricultural context.

The sneering state

Although ordinary people in many parts of the world came to appreciate potatoes, this enthusiasm was not always shared by representatives of the state. In 17th-century Ireland, colonial officials complained that the prolific potato allowed locals to laze around and enjoy life, rather than working hard for the benefit of the occupying English state. "What need they to work, who can content themselves with potatoes?" one English officer, William Petty, remarked testily. Potatoes were derided for being *too* prolific.

Yet, during the 18th century, such criticism was replaced by approbation. As industry and agriculture expanded and warfare increased, high-yielding, easy-to-grow foods began to look more attractive to statesmen. The potato regained its allure. Patriotic individuals across Europe encouraged potato consumption, and sponsored all manner of competitions and other promotions in the hope of shifting consumers from

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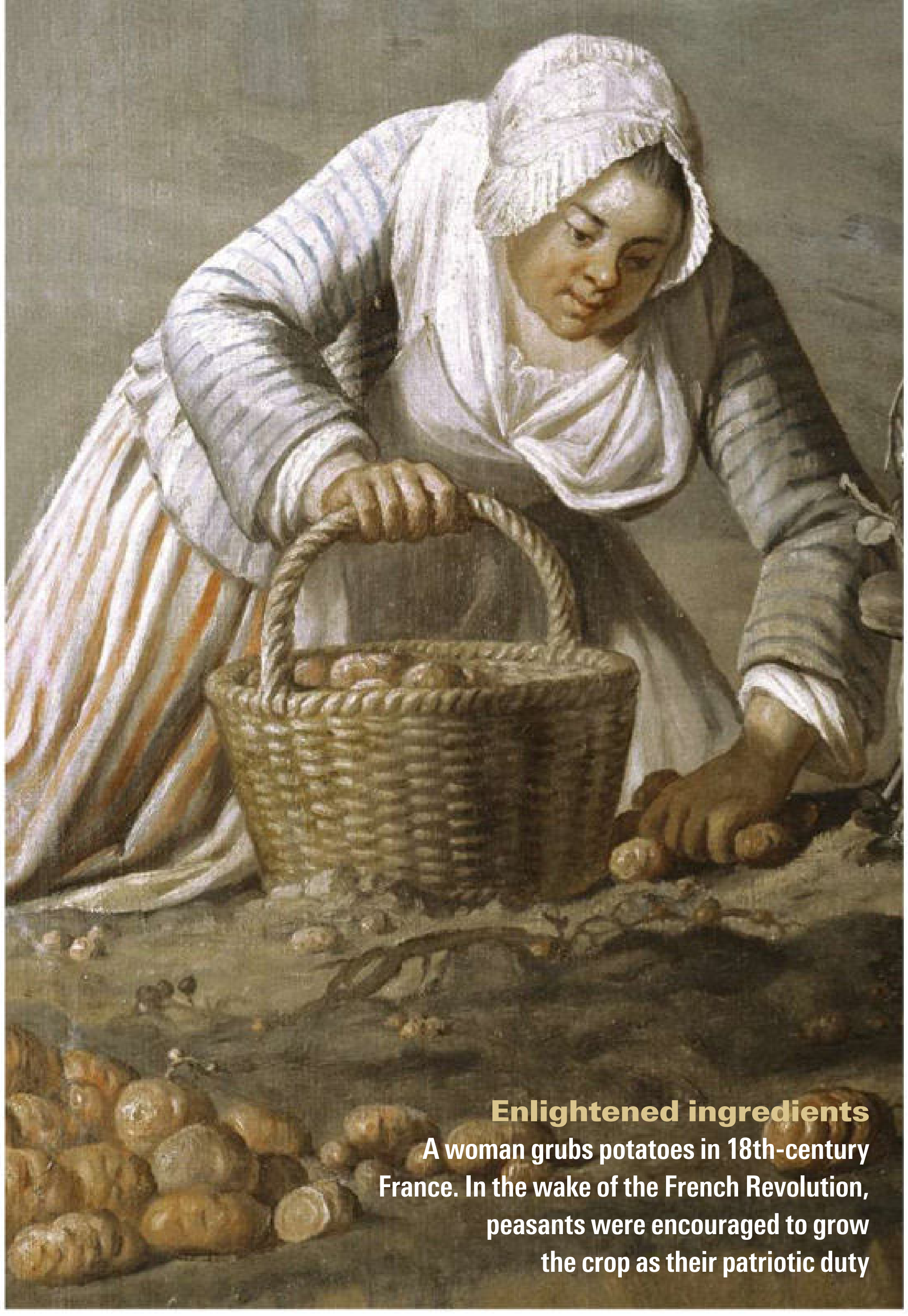
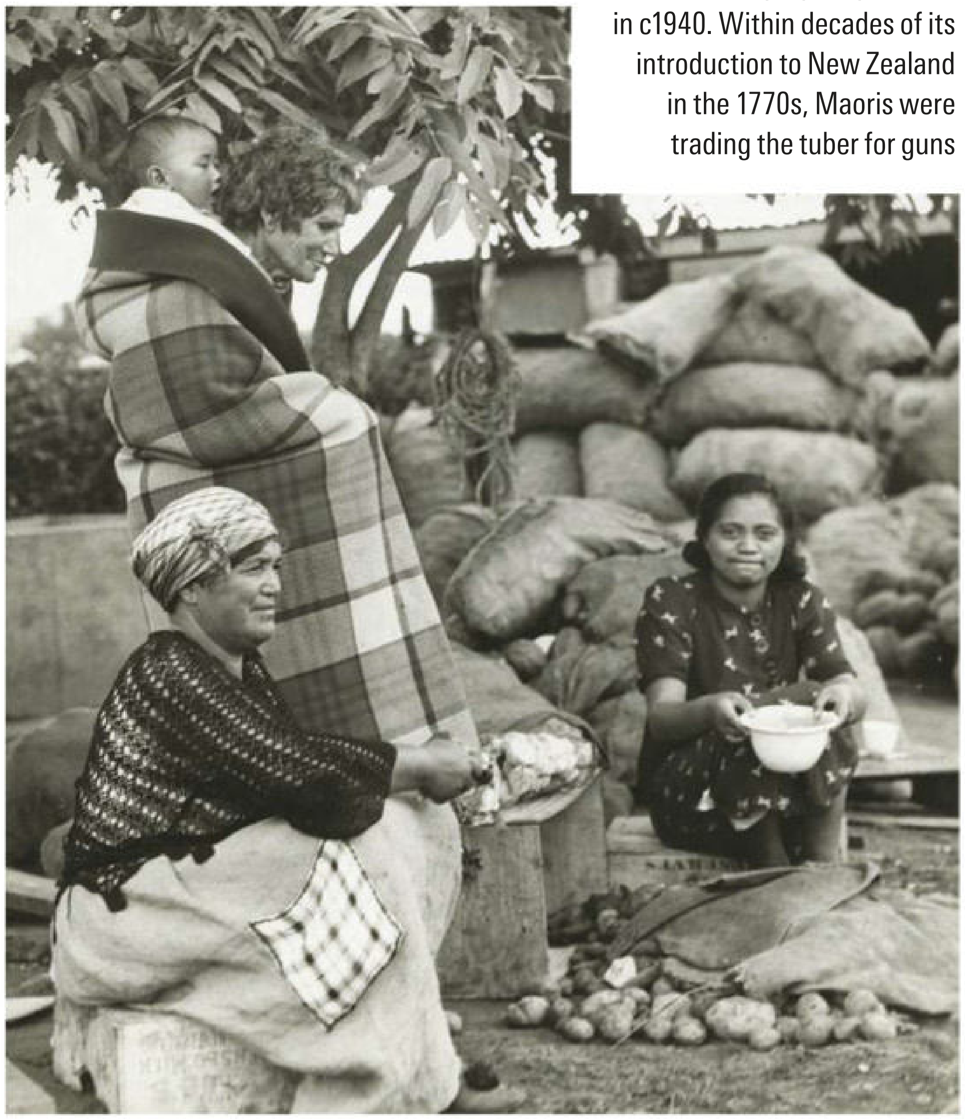


Enlightened ingredients
A woman grubs potatoes in 18th-century France. In the wake of the French Revolution, peasants were encouraged to grow the crop as their patriotic duty



Secret weapon
Maori women prepare potatoes in c1940. Within decades of its introduction to New Zealand in the 1770s, Maoris were trading the tuber for guns

wheat bread and other grains onto potatoes.

In 1790, Peter Sirkal, a peasant from Lifland (part of the Russian empire), received 10 roubles, enough to buy a horse or perhaps two bulls, when he won a competition sponsored by the St Petersburg Free Economic Society for the largest potato harvest. Four years later, the Tuileries Gardens in Paris were dug up, replaced with potato fields planted on the orders of the national government, which likewise hoped to encourage wider cultivation of the root. Increasing potato consumption became a goal for many European states during the Enlightenment.

But with the coming of a new century, the potato's fortunes swung yet again. Pessimism about the potato's capacity to contribute to economic growth and national security returned during the Victorian era. With growing industrialisation came an obsession with nutritional science as the key to unlocking economic growth. 'Human motors' – the working bodies who powered factories – needed sufficient protein and other nutrients in order to ensure commercial success. Nineteenth-century nutritionists were not enthusiastic about potatoes. Sadly, they were believed to encourage 'lazy potato blood' and a sluggish personality. A mere 14 days of subsisting on the tuber would render a man unable to work at all, in the view of the Dutch physician Jacob Moleschott.

Worse, potatoes were now associated with backwardness. In demonstrations of the potato's negative effect on the advance toward modernity, the Irish peasant was – as he had been two centuries earlier – Exhibit A. Because they subsisted on potatoes that they grew themselves, Irish cottiers could resist becoming a rural proletariat wholly dependent on wages for their survival. From this perspective, potatoes were a roadblock on the route to capitalism.

This viewpoint would have terrible consequences. Many of the 19th-century liberals in Whitehall who ran colonial Ireland viewed the terrible potato famine that decimated the country between 1845 and 1849 as a blessing, because it promised to wipe out a way of life they viewed as archaic. How, asked Charles Trevelyan, assistant secretary to Her Majesty's Treasury, were Irish labourers to support themselves in the post-famine future? He saw only one possibility: "The position occupied by these classes is no longer tenable and it is necessary for them to live by the wages of their labour." The Irish would no longer eat potatoes that they grew themselves, but rather grain, "which they will purchase out of their wages". In other words, they would become a rural proletariat.

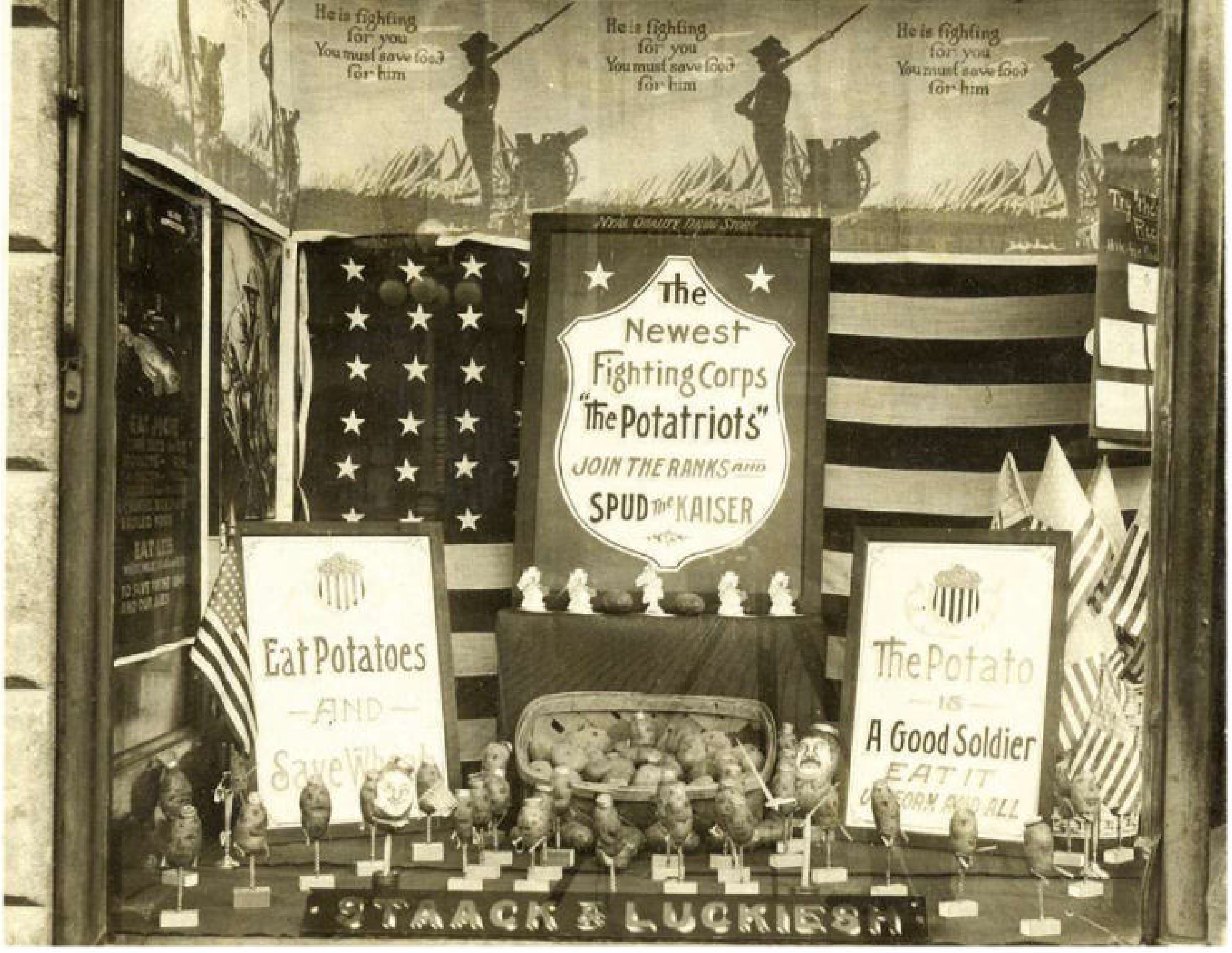
While, in the 17th century, writers such as Petty disliked the potato because it enabled Irish peasants to evade the reach of the state, by the 19th century its crime was to defy the inevitable advance of capitalism.

Expert opinion about the potato's contributions to building powerful economies and strong states has continued to oscillate between enthusiasm and disdain. During both world wars, potatoes were enlisted in the war effort, often in the hope of protecting scarce grain supplies.

Going hungry
The famine memorial at Custom House Quay, Dublin. British officialdom's conviction that potatoes promoted 'backwardness' had tragic results for the people of Ireland

BRIDGEMAN/ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY - NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND/DREAMSTIME

A battalion of potatoes brandished sabres and waved the stars and stripes under the leadership of General Pershing


He is fighting for you You must save food for him
The Newest Fighting Corps "The Potatriots"
JOIN THE RANKS AND SPUD THE KAISER
Eat Potatoes AND Save Wheat
The Potato IS A Good Soldier EAT IT
STAACK & LUCKIESH

Spud guns A shop in Iowa urges "potatriots" to "Join the ranks and spud the kaiser". With huge amounts of wheat being shipped to Europe, America's wartime government actively promoted potato consumption

In the First World War, the US government hoped increased domestic potato consumption would compensate for the export of 20 million bushels of wheat destined for allies in Europe. Potatoes featured regularly in the flourless wartime 'victory recipes' distributed by the new Food Administration.

The owners of the Staack & Luckiesh pharmacy in the Iowa town of Maquoketa used their shop window (shown above right) to present an imaginative staging of such advice. Below a placard exhorting Americans to "Join the ranks and spud the kaiser", a small battalion of potatoes brandished sabres and waved the stars and stripes under the leadership of a larger potato representing General Pershing, head of the US Expeditionary Forces in Europe. An explanatory label hailed the formation of "the newest fighting corps: the Potatriots". "Eat potatoes and save wheat" was the overall message, proclaimed clearly on a placard. Suitable recipes could be obtained inside the shop.

In contrast, the agricultural development programmes created from 1945 accorded almost no importance to potatoes and other tubers, and focused instead on grains such as maize and rice. From their perspective, the potato was "not relevant" to global food security.

NEGRA SALAMANCA
NEGRA SALAMANCA 1.50

Diverse appeal
A potato stall in a Peruvian market. Peru is now home to up to 3,800 potato varieties, making it a key component in the country's quest for food security

Against the ebb-and-flow of varying governmental attitudes towards the potato, small farmers around the world continue to appreciate the tuber's many virtues. The United Nations was right to hail the potato as an important source of food security, especially for poor farmers in the global south.

In the UN's view, the potato contributes to food security because it is widely eaten, and hence is "a truly global food", because it is nutritious and easy to cultivate, and – crucially – because it is *not* an internationally traded commodity

Since potato markets are generally local, shoppers are protected from global price fluctuations. Cereal prices, in contrast, have increased markedly since 1990, causing serious hunger in the developing world. Many people grow potatoes for their own consumption, and so can avoid markets altogether. The very qualities that outraged William Petty in the 1670s, and Charles Trevelyan in the 1840s, are now identified as virtues.

Local knowledge

In declaring 2008 the International Year of the Potato, the UN praised the expertise of small-scale potato farmers around the world for protecting the genetic diversity that is now identified as a major component in a sustainable food system. Like trained scientists, small farmers are often experimentalists, engaging in observation, interpretation, field-trials, evaluation and manipulation in order to identify and develop new cultivars and new methods of cultivation. They discuss their experiences with others in their locality, exchange seeds and techniques, and adapt their own practices in light of these conversations.

In the Andes, many potato farmers maintain between 12 and 15 different plots in continuous cultivation; yet more are cultivated non-continuously. They may also swap both seeds and fields with neighbours. Through such exchanges it is possible for a single farmer to gain access to up to a hundred different potato cultivars. Matching particular seed potatoes to the soil and environmental requirements of specific pieces of land requires a vast body of practical agronomic knowledge, and leads to ongoing experimentation.

This sort of constant evaluation and innovation is responsible for the remarkable diversity of potato varieties in the Andes. In the 1960s agronomists thought that Peru possessed some 1,400 native potato varieties; current estimates now put the figure somewhere between 2,700 and 3,800. Today, the global potato provides nourishment to farmers and eaters around the world, including in its Andean homeland. H

Rebecca Earle is a professor in the Department of History at the University of Warwick. She is the author of *Feeding the People: The Politics of the Potato*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in June

LISTEN To listen to food journalist Sheila Dillon reveal how potatoes changed the world on BBC Radio 4's **The Food Programme**, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08n20k3*

NARA/ALAMY

BOOKS

EUROPE

“Spectacular buildings are brought to life alongside those who built them”

Jonathan Harris reviews Judith Herrin’s *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe* › page 80

BIOGRAPHY

“Louverture was, in the author’s words, ‘the first black superhero of the modern age’”

James Walvin reviews Sudhir Hazareesingh’s *Black Spartacus. The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture* › page 76

FICTION

“I wanted my characters to reflect the complexity and strangeness of life in the Middle Ages”

Matthew Kneale on his new historical novel, *Pilgrims* › page 79

ROYAL

“Edward VIII’s abdication was a blessing in disguise. He was a shallow, weak character”

Nigel Jones discusses Alexander Larman’s *The Crown in Crisis* › page 79

GLOBAL

“I would love to travel back to AD 1000, the pinnacle of the great traditional civilisations”

Michael Wood gives his opinion on Valerie Hansen’s *The Year 1000* › page 78

DREAMSTIME

"People put two Freemasons in a row and make a conspiracy"

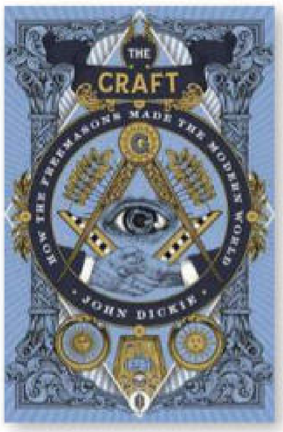
JOHN DICKIE talks to Ellie Cawthorne about his new book charting the history of Freemasonry, from Enlightenment ideals and influential networks to secrecy and satanic conspiracy stories

Ellie Cawthorne: When you tell people you are writing a book on the Freemasons, what are the initial reactions you get?
John Dickie: In Britain, I think there are two competing stories that dominate discussions of Freemasonry. On the one hand, they appear in the public imagination as a shady organisation with something to hide. And this is what fuels the newspaper coverage they get – outlandish stories in which they are responsible for cover-ups of the sinking of the *Titanic*, or the Hillsborough disaster. People put two Freemasons in a row and make a conspiracy.

Counter to that runs the Freemasons' own narrative of their history, one of a noble, honourable tradition of brotherhood and altruism. This, admittedly, is much more dull.

But somewhere in between these two stories is a vast, untapped world of extraordinary tales about what Freemasonry has meant to people, about the things it has got involved in and the paranoia that Freemasons have generated throughout their history. And also how Freemasonry has been hugely historically important.

From its inception, secrecy has undoubtedly been an important element of Freemasonry. Why is this the case?
That's certainly true. It's been a great selling tool for them – this idea that if you join the Masons, you will learn the secrets and become part of an elect band with access to privileged knowledge. But the way that Masons use the word 'secrecy' actually translates to something more like sacredness, because it's used to create a sense of awe and specialness around their rituals, which are very important to them.



The Craft: How the Freemasons Made the Modern World
by John Dickie
(Hodder & Stoughton, 496 pages, £25)

But while it's been a very powerful tool in the Masons' arsenal, secrecy also inevitably leads to misunderstanding. After the 1980s, they had a kind of *glasnost* and opened their institutions and their libraries to non-Freemason scholars like me. But their latest formula for explaining it gives you some idea of the problem. Now they say: "We are not a secret society, we're a society with secrets." That's not exactly going to put people's minds at rest, is it? Instead, secrecy offers up a dark mirror for the rest of the world to project whatever it wants into. The way that secrecy is manipulated on both sides has been one of the great engines of Masonic history.

What can you tell us about the genesis of Freemasonry as a society?
The big question is how you get from *stone*masons, who have calluses on their hands and put slabs into walls, to *Free*masons, who have nothing to do with actual stonemasonry but instead adopt its tools – plumb lines and trowels and so on – as moral metaphors. Building offers a good metaphor for making yourself a better person.

But how did that transition happen? I think the first crucial stage was in the Scottish court of James VI, where ministers were trying to win over the stonemasons guild and introduced them to some very powerful elements of Renaissance culture. One key aspect of this was the art of memory. The great Roman orator Cicero used to remember his speeches by imagining himself in a building. Each room would represent a section of his speech, and each item in the room would be a point he needed to make. In the Renaissance, that kind of memory exercise was seen to have almost magical properties. It could, in the right circumstances, give you access to the mind of God. And the Masons began to see their ritualistic spaces as something similar, as theatres of memory. You can still see this in the design of Masonic lodges today: a chessboard floor with thrones around the edge and lots of symbols, such as globes, candles, columns or Bibles. It's a sort of ritual theatre where you go through your Masonic journey, with each stage marked by a ceremony.

I think that was the magic moment that really elevated the initiation rituals of a stonemason's guild into something more philosophically ambitious. Then gentleman non-stonemasons began to be attracted to Freemasonry as an organisation that was open to exciting intellectual developments.

Another crucial moment was the foundation of the first Grand Lodge of England, a kind of governing body for Freemasonry, in 1717. That event took place at the time when the Whig regime was establishing itself, and influential Tories were thrown out of every available position of influence in society and politics. The early years of the Grand Lodge are still surrounded in mystery, but there was certainly a Whig takeover there too. This was the moment where Freemasonry came off the byways of culture and entered the motorway of the Enlightenment. Within 15 years, there were Masonic lodges across Europe and the world, in Istanbul, the Caribbean, North America and Aleppo. It's the most extraordinary success story of an idea that had found its moment.

What motivated men to join the Freemasons?
Undoubtedly, networking was part of the story. It was a way to connect yourself to certain bigwigs. It's no coincidence that Huguenot exiles were important in early Freemasonry. These were immigrants on the make, and Freemasonry allowed them to make a play for patronage. It was a place for young men to learn from older men,

MIKAEL BUCK

PROFILE

John Dickie is professor of Italian studies at UCL. His books include *Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2004), and *Delizia! The Epic History of Italians and Their Food* (Free Press, 2007). John has written and presented a number of historical TV documentaries. His website is *johndickie.net* and it could be enormously helpful if you needed to travel across the globe. Wherever you went, you would have a ready-made home from home, with familiar rituals and contacts, and your reputation would be able to travel with you.

There was undoubtedly a lot of boozing and back-slapping going on too. But it was by no means all cynical. There was clearly something very powerful about Freemasonry's formula of ritual symbolism and moral messages for its members. It offered a means not only of individual development, but also a feeling of shared growth and male bonding. After the world wars, a lot of men turned to Freemasonry for the comradeship and sense of meaning that they found in war, but also for a way of coming to terms with big spiritual questions such as the meaning of life.

People often make vague assertions about Freemasons pulling all the strings. Can you give some examples how their influence actually played out in reality?
It could be extremely varied. Research done on early 19th-century Dresden shows that an awful lot of doctors and lawyers were Freemasons. This meant that it was much harder to become a successful lawyer or doctor if you weren't a Freemason. But if you were an outsider wanting to get into the profession, joining the Masons was actually a relatively small price to pay in order to gain access. The network also had a role in monitoring people's reputations and making sure that they maintained professional standards. In a sense, that could be seen as a positive thing.

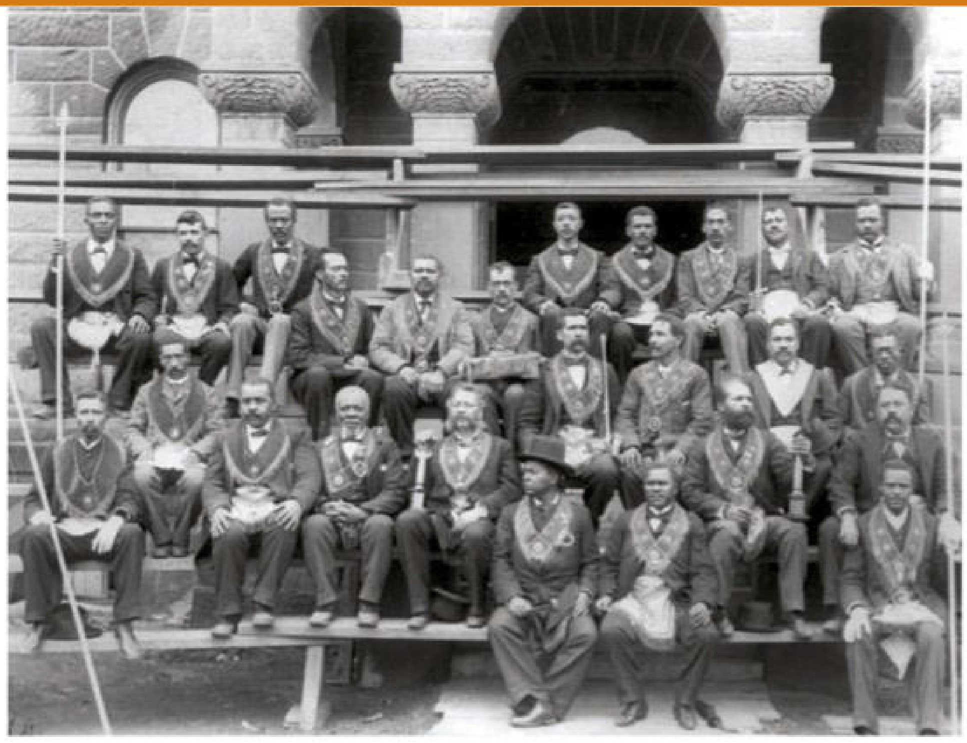
Another example comes from under Napoleon, who revived Freemasonry after the French Revolution and used it as an instrument of his regime. Masonic lodges became temples for his personality cult. Tons of his generals and top people in his regime were installed at the head of grand lodges in countries that were then incorporated into the French empire. If you were an ambitious Neopolitan, for example, the lodge would be the place to hobnob with the French who'd come down to run the kingdom. So Freemasonry was a mechanism to control political culture; it was an instrument of the regime.

Probably the best example of Masonic networking at its very worst is Italy's P2 Lodge, which was mixed up in all kinds of corruption: blackmail, information gathering, rightwing terrorism, laundering money for the mafia – you name it.

So Freemasonry didn't always live up to its foundational ideals?
Many Freemasons *were* dedicated to trying to live by those ideals – enlightened principles of universal brotherhood and reason, as well as inclusiveness irrespective of race, creed, colour and background. And it's important to acknowledge that they weren't just paying lip service to these ideas: they truly believed in them.

But that universalism was paradoxical from the beginning. It preached equal values for all, except if you were a woman. Or if you couldn't afford the entrance fee. While it may have been formed with high ideals, it was ultimately victim to the same societal forces as everything else. Geography is a key qualification in any discussion about Freemasonry. Because very soon after it was created, the organisation was presented with a huge problem of brand control. People were inventing different forms all over the place to suit their own interests.

> **"Taxil said he'd witnessed satanic goings on, and seen the devil himself in Masonic lodges. He claimed to have been party to a Masonic conspiracy led by chain-smoking lesbians"**



A divided brotherhood Members of an African-American grand lodge in 1897. US Freemasonry has "been racially divided since 1775", says John Dickie

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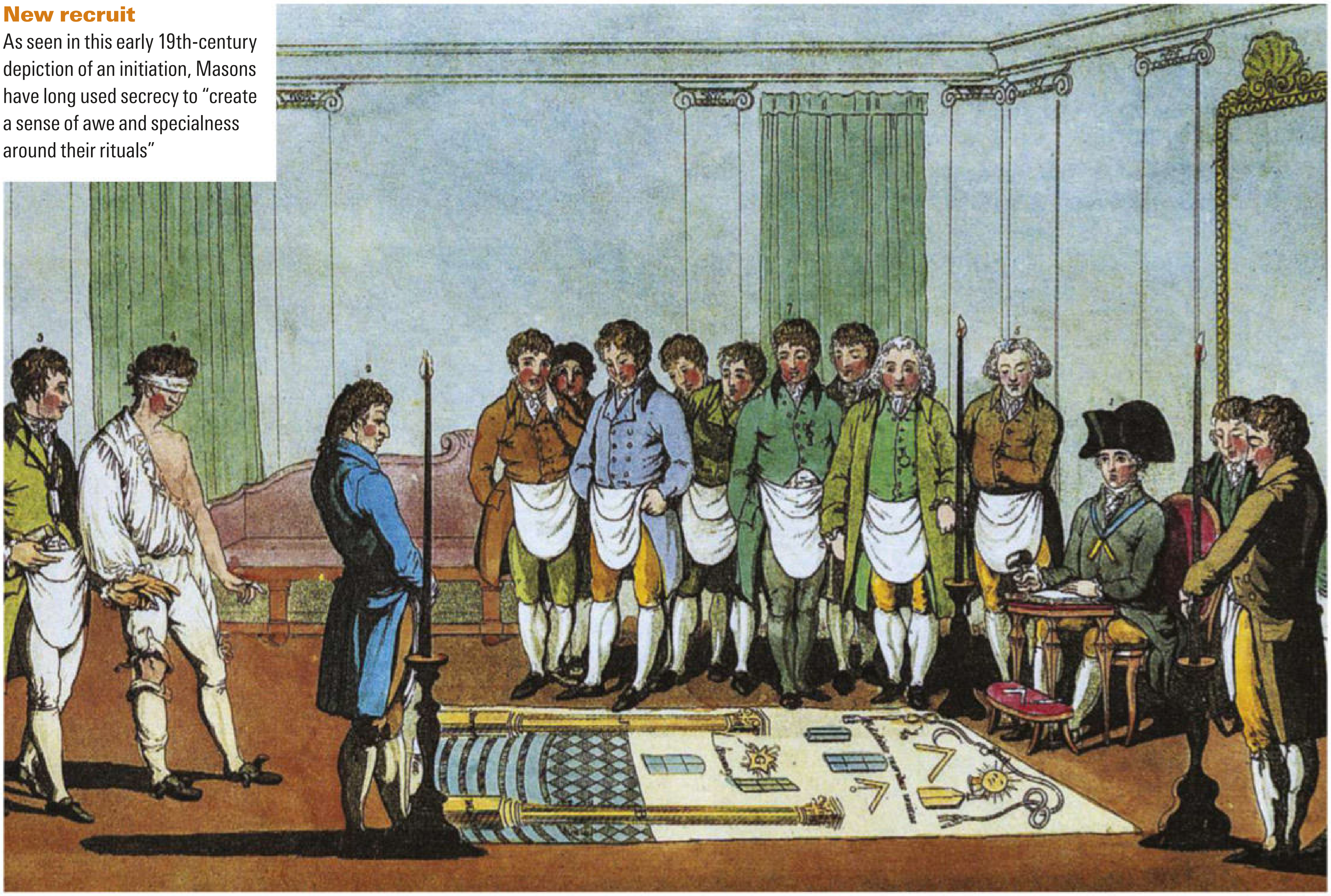
One interesting aspect of your research is Masonry's relationship to race and imperialism. What can you tell us about that?
Freemasonry's foundational code theoretically makes it open to all. That said, in many contexts, it has had a lot of problems dealing with race. The United States is the most startling case: it's a universal brotherhood founded on the ideals of freedom and tolerance that has been racially divided since 1775. America has always had two Freemasonrys – one black and one white. That's still the case to this day.

Imperialism is another huge blind spot in the way that Masons talk about themselves and their own past. In many ways, Masonry oiled the wheels of empire. As an imperial bureaucrat sent across the globe, you could walk into a lodge in Cape Town or Calcutta and instantly tap into a social life and support network. It also provided a handy cover story for imperialism, by cloaking it in the ideals of brotherhood and universal cooperation. But what happened when the locals wanted to join? In some cases, like in 18th-century India, some were welcomed into lodges very early on because imperialists wanted to co-opt local rulers. But towards the end of the 19th century, when Indians wanted to be integrated into power structures, attitudes towards their membership became more complicated. The ways that people like Rudyard Kipling, who believed profoundly in Freemasonry but was also profoundly racist, negotiated those strange contradictions is something that today's Masons need to come to terms with.

How have the conspiracy theories surrounding Freemasonry led to Masons being persecuted?
The Freemasons have inspired a lot of fear over the years. They were already worrying conservative Europe in the 18th century, when the French Revolution came along. A French priest in exile in London called Augustine Barruel wrote a book blaming it all on the Freemasons. That really fired the starting gun on the conspiracy theories.

From that point onwards, anti-Masonry became a feature of almost all rightwing thinking. The idea of a Masonic conspiracy – an infiltrating power hidden in the lodges, some weird Magus or homunculus pulling all the strings – became the template for a new incarnation of anti-Semitism based on the idea of an obscure financial elite controlling everything. As the two began to merge, the idea of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy emerged, which Hitler talks about in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was prepared to turn his anti-Masonry on and off as suited his political purposes, and his political purposes were fundamentally anti-Semitic. Targeting the Masons also gave a



New recruit

As seen in this early 19th-century depiction of an initiation, Masons have long used secrecy to "create a sense of awe and specialness around their rituals"

ALAMY

socialistic flavour to his ideas when he needed it, because it seemed like he was sticking it to a bourgeois cabal.

Very few people know about Franco's persecution of the Freemasons, which was astonishingly paranoid. During the Spanish Civil War, his people massacred Masons out of hand. It's thought there were probably about 5,000 in Spain before the civil war. By the time it had ended, so many had gone into exile or been killed, that number had dropped to less than 1,000. This persecution went on into the '60s and '70s. There was a special tribunal set up to try Masons, and the minimum sentence was 12 years and a day. Franco's great archive in Salamanca had index cards for 80,000 suspected Brothers. And this whole repressive machine was driven by the same old fantasy – of an endlessly resourceful, invisible Masonic conspiracy.

What about Freemasonry's relationship with the church?

For most of the 19th century, the official policy of the Catholic church was that Freemasons had caused the ills of the modern world through a demonic conspiracy. The papacy couldn't see their rituals and code of religious tolerance as anything other than heretical.

One peculiar incident that highlights the deep level of distrust is the Taxil hoax. In the 1880s, the Catholic church was locked in a culture war with the forces of secularisation. The church saw this as the rise of Satan and blamed the Freemasons. In this context, a man called Leo Taxil, who had been fervently anti-Catholic, converted and declared that he was a former Freemason who'd witnessed satanic goings-on and that he'd even seen the devil manifest himself in lodges. He claimed to have unmasked a Masonic conspiracy led by chain-smoking lesbians (bizarrely, Masonic conspiracies often end up with women at their head). Taxil went on to write reams of ever more far-fetched material and gained massive support from the Catholic church hierarchy until, 12 years later, he declared the entire thing had been a hoax.

Has Freemasonry adapted well to changing times?

Yes, in that its most successful era was probably the mid-20th century. I think the peak was in 1959 in the United States, when there were more than 4 million members. If you were white, American and middle class, you were fairly likely to be a Freemason.

I don't think they are likely to die out anytime soon, but they are now a largely greying organisation. I think in order to sustain themselves, they do need to reflect on what their success was built on. The picture of the classic Freemason in 1950s America was the guy who drives back from the office to find his dinner prepared for him and then heads out for an evening at the lodge, leaving his wife behind to polish the floor. You just can't live like that anymore. But there are some signs of moving forward. For example, French Freemasons recently admitted women to the Grand Orient. Interestingly, it was a trans woman who first broke the mould.

Why do you think it's important to understand Masonic history?

The sheer scale of its reach, to start with. Freemasonry has proven to be extraordinarily contagious. That model, of organising yourself into a brotherhood with rituals, symbols and so on, helped give rise to things as diverse as the Sicilian Mafia and the Mormon church.

I'm also intrigued by anybody who believes in the great Enlightenment ideals of tolerance, reason, cosmopolitanism and the equality of rights. We need to understand the history of those ideas and how they've been put into practice. I think of Freemasonry and its different manifestations as a kind of tragicomedy of those Enlightenment values, brought into very sharp focus. It makes us think about how hard it is to live out our ideals and what it can take to achieve that. **H**

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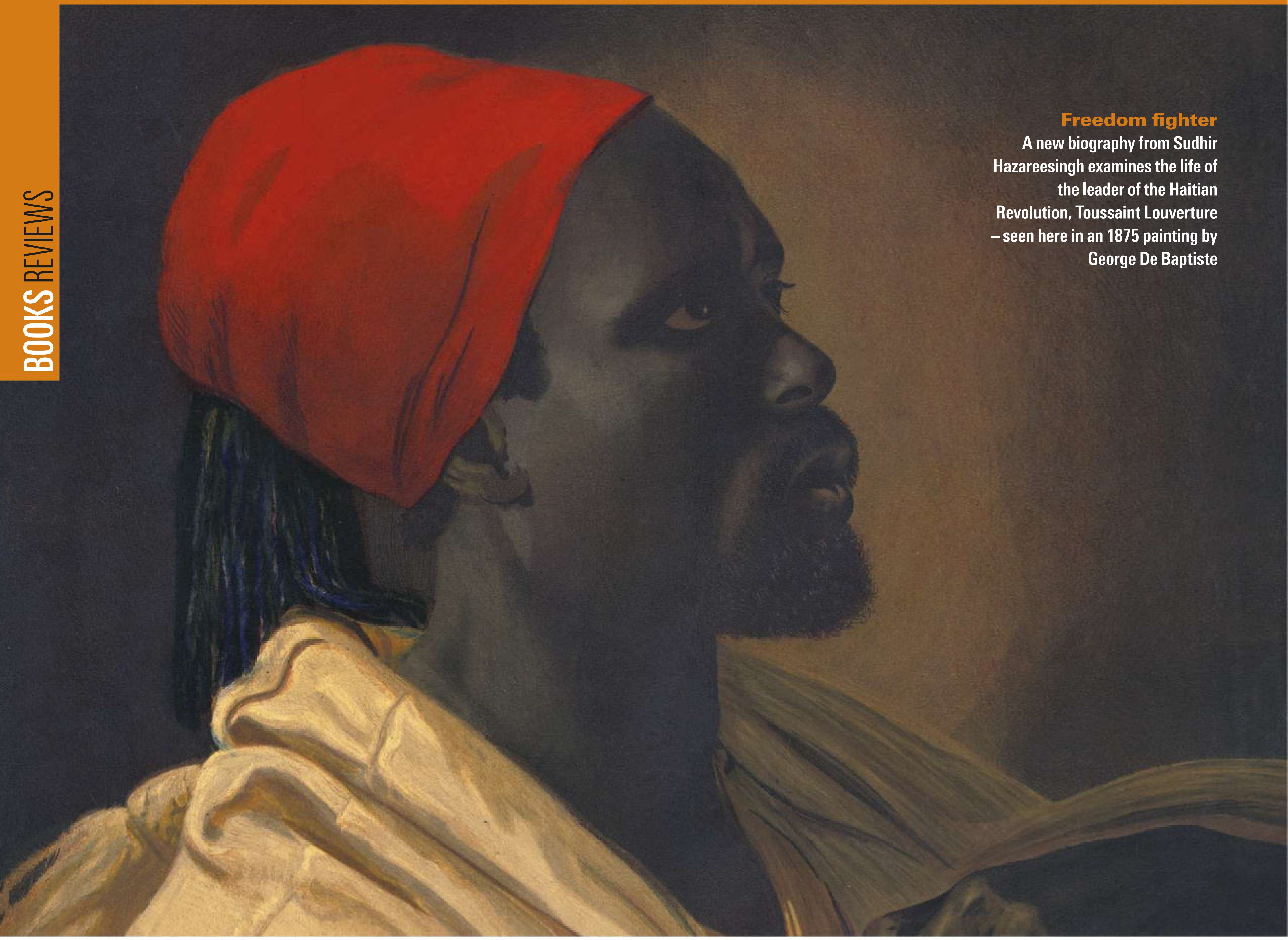
Listen to an extended version of this interview with John Dickie on our podcast soon at **historyextra.com/podcast**

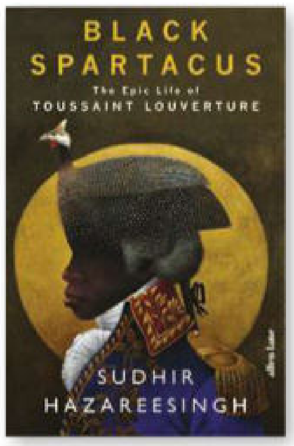


Freedom fighter
A new biography from Sudhir Hazareesingh examines the life of the leader of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint Louverture – seen here in an 1875 painting by George De Baptiste

BIOGRAPHY

The world turned upside down

JAMES WALVIN recommends a stirring biography of Toussaint Louverture, the revolutionary leader who overthrew French imperialists in Haiti and shook the foundations of the slave trade



Black Spartacus: The Epic Life of Toussaint Louverture
by Sudhir Hazareesingh
Allen Lane, 464 pages, £25

Toussaint Louverture has long been a heroic figure in the story of black freedom and the long battle against slavery. Taking its name from that given to Louverture by admirers in the 1790s, this new biography from Sudhir Hazareesingh delves into the life and legacy of the revolutionary who became the pre-eminent leader of the enslaved in their fight for freedom.

Born enslaved in the 1740s, Louverture was raised as a menial worker on a plantation in French-held Saint-Domingue (in what is now Haiti). The Caribbean colony was then the main source of French imperial wealth – affluence which can still be seen in the handsome architecture of Bordeaux – mainly via sugar and coffee.

Louverture evolved into a self-made man of great accomplishment; African in his background and sympathies, Christian to his fingertips, and steeped in French learning – he was very much a man of the Enlightenment. Characterised by great sophistication and guile, Louverture was known for his physical strength, bravery and industry, as well as his astute leadership, military abilities and charismatic presence. He was also a prodigiously busy man, commonly working 16 hours a day and sometimes drafting 200

GETTY IMAGES

letters a day. He rode furiously, always ahead of his aides, and was painstaking in his attention to detail.

These personal qualities helped steer insurgent slaves to ultimate freedom when Louverture emerged as the major challenge to French power in Saint-Dominigue as the figurehead of the Haitian Revolution.

In the process, Saint-Domingue was wracked by waves of recurring bloody and often fratricidal fighting: between France and her insurgent colonists, between enslaved people and the free, indeed between all the various social and political groups that made up that astonishing place. Colonial officials, planters, free people of colour and slaves all took up arms against one another.

Added to all this was the disruptive role of Spain, next door in Santo Domingo; the British, lurking offshore or in nearby Jamaica; and the US, anxiously watching close by. Yet from this nightmare of confusion, Louverture laid the foundations for an independent Haiti. This was finally granted in 1804, but Louverture did not live to see it happen. He was tricked by Napoleon, who was keen to restore slavery and French control over Saint-Domingue, into a grim imprisoned exile in the Jura mountains and died in 1803.

Yet even after his death, Louverture's legacy had a significant impact. The people he had led into revolution – a diverse mix of Africans, local born and Europeans – had seen off slavery and had defeated invasions by Britain, Spain and France. The colony's upheavals had sent émigrés fleeing to other Caribbean islands and throughout the Americas; their graves dot the Catholic cemeteries of New Orleans and Charleston.

Louverture's revolution also served as a dire warning to slave owners everywhere. He came to personify the nightmare of all the slave-owning colonial powers, confirming everything that planters and their backers predicted about the risks of dangling the prospect of abolition, and the Rights of Man, before the enslaved. Given a chance, slaves would bring down the house of bondage.

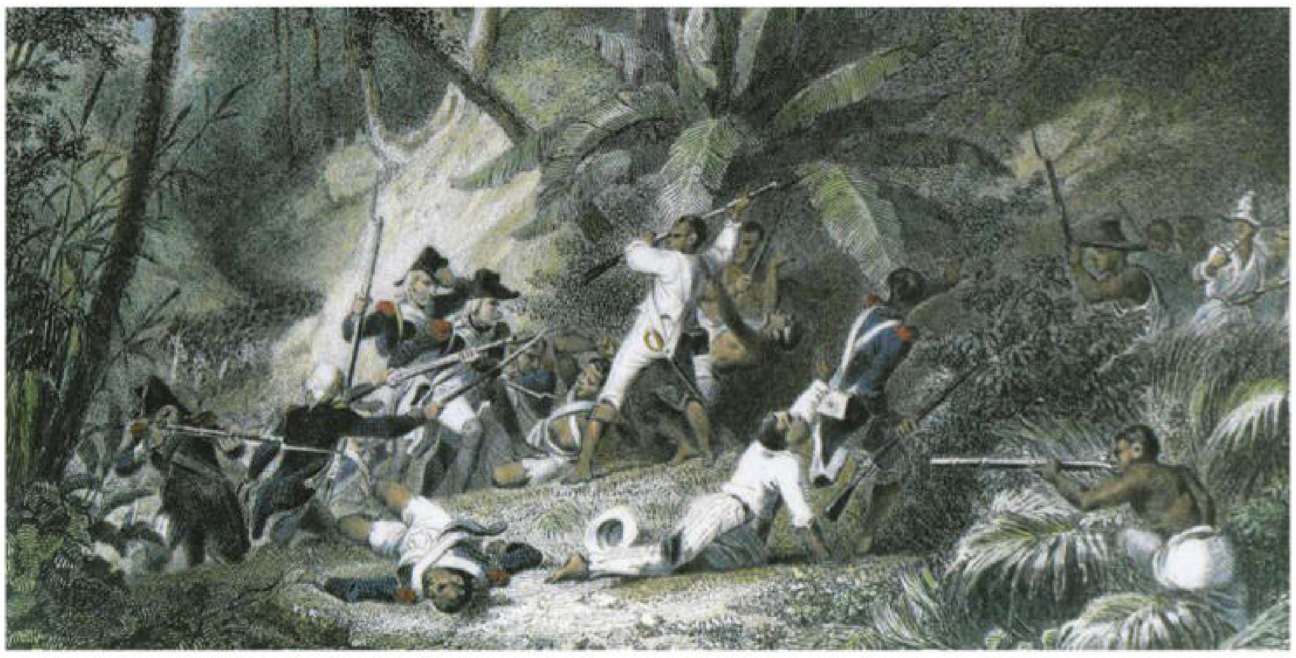
> **"Louverture came to personify the nightmare of all slave-owning colonial powers... Given a chance, slaves would bring down the house of bondage"**

Tied to Louverture's name and words, the prospect of freedom took root clean across the enslaved Americas. Time and again, there were reports of slaves praising his name, in the islands and South America.

For much the same reason, Louverture's memory has been evoked by anti-slavery and anti-colonial campaigners from that day to this. His reputation as the man who destroyed slavery and in effect shattered French colonial policy in the region has weathered different criticisms over two centuries. It is a legend, according to Hazareesingh, which "played to a dizzyingly broad gallery, reverberating throughout the Atlantic world and beyond…" His name was even used as a rallying call in the Māori Wars in New Zealand. He was, in the author's words, "the first black superhero of the modern age".

Black Spartacus is a rich and utterly engrossing study of major significance, confirming the importance of Louverture both in his own time and beyond.

James Walvin's latest book is *Freedom: The Overthrow of the Slave Empires* (Robinson, 2019)

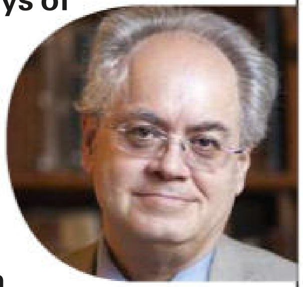


Revolutionary retribution The Haitian Revolution saw the French colony of Saint-Dominigue wracked by waves of bloody violence. But Toussaint Louverture never lived to see the conclusion of the uprising

ALAMY/FRAN MONKS/CONNOR HARRIS/CARLOTTA BONAFINI

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

David Abulafia on how the oceans have shaped human history



"There are many ways of writing maritime history. But what I'm really interested in is the way that humans have interacted with the oceans – using them as a means of global communication, often between continents. The Mediterranean, for example, is where Asia, Europe and Africa meet. I'm intrigued by what we can learn when we focus on the sea itself, rather than the lands around it."

Alice Procter on museums and colonialism

"If you look at the objects on display in museums, there's a lot of emphasis on how they are made or their beauty. But we don't see much about where these objects come from and how they ended up on display. Yet many pieces have really contested histories – they've been acquired through violence or illegal circumstances like looting, particularly associated with colonialism. When we don't address that, we ignore and erase the realities of these objects."

Clement Knox on the history of seduction

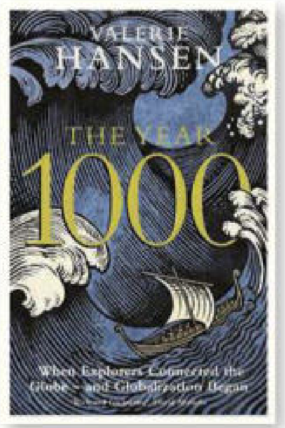
"When we're talking about 'seduction', the elephant in the room is always going to be power. We like to imagine that thinking about sex in terms of power dynamics is quite a modern idea, but actually we can trace it back to the Enlightenment. Over time, debates around seduction have been a way to explore issues like race, class and the exploitation of women."

MORE FROM US Listen to these episodes and more for free at **historyextra.com/podcast**

WORLD HISTORY

The dawn of globalisation

MICHAEL WOOD recommends a dazzling journey across the early medieval world, which argues that great civilisations were interconnected much earlier than we might think


VALERIE HANSEN
THE YEAR 1000
When Explorers Connected the Globe – and Globalization Began

The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the Globe – and Globalization Began
by Valerie Hansen
Viking, 320 pages, £20

If you could hop in a time machine and go back to one period of history, which would it be? It's a fun game to play. I would travel back to AD 1000, the pinnacle of the great traditional civilisations, and journey across the world. This is the moment when, with a bit of luck and a couple of good phrase books (they had them), you could set out from Dover, across Europe to Byzantium, through Cairo in the brilliant Fatimid caliphate, then out on the Silk Road across central Asia – or down into Cholan India, and take one of the sea routes through Indonesia to the thronging ports of Song China, one of history's greatest civilisations. There you could relax with beer on the shore of the Yellow Sea, reflecting on what humanity had achieved so far and perhaps wondering what lay ahead.

That's the journey that frames Valerie Hansen's *The Year 1000*, a dazzling sweep across the world a millennium ago. Professor Hansen is the author of a terrific history of China, and a remarkable book about the Silk Road from the late Roman period to the early Middle Ages. Insights from these previous works inform this sparkling narrative, which spans the entire globe with a fabulous cast of characters – Vikings, Mayans, Africans, Chinese and Arabs.

Here, she poses a big question: when did globalisation begin? Adam Smith famously argued that the conquest of the New World was the key: "the greatest event in history", when the Europeans occupied an entire continent, devastating the population, plundering its resources and linking the world up by sea, paving the way for the European empires.

Hansen, however, argues that the catalyst for globalisation came much earlier, with new technologies, trade routes and ideas. Paradoxically, as she shows, in AD 1000 it was Song dynasty China that was the global leader. With a quarter (maybe more) of the world's population, they had rational governance, wonderful artistic achievements and staggering scientific inventions, and were poised to become the first modern state. It didn't happen; not because of inherent failings of Chinese thought, but because of war. In the end the west would triumph – at least for a while.

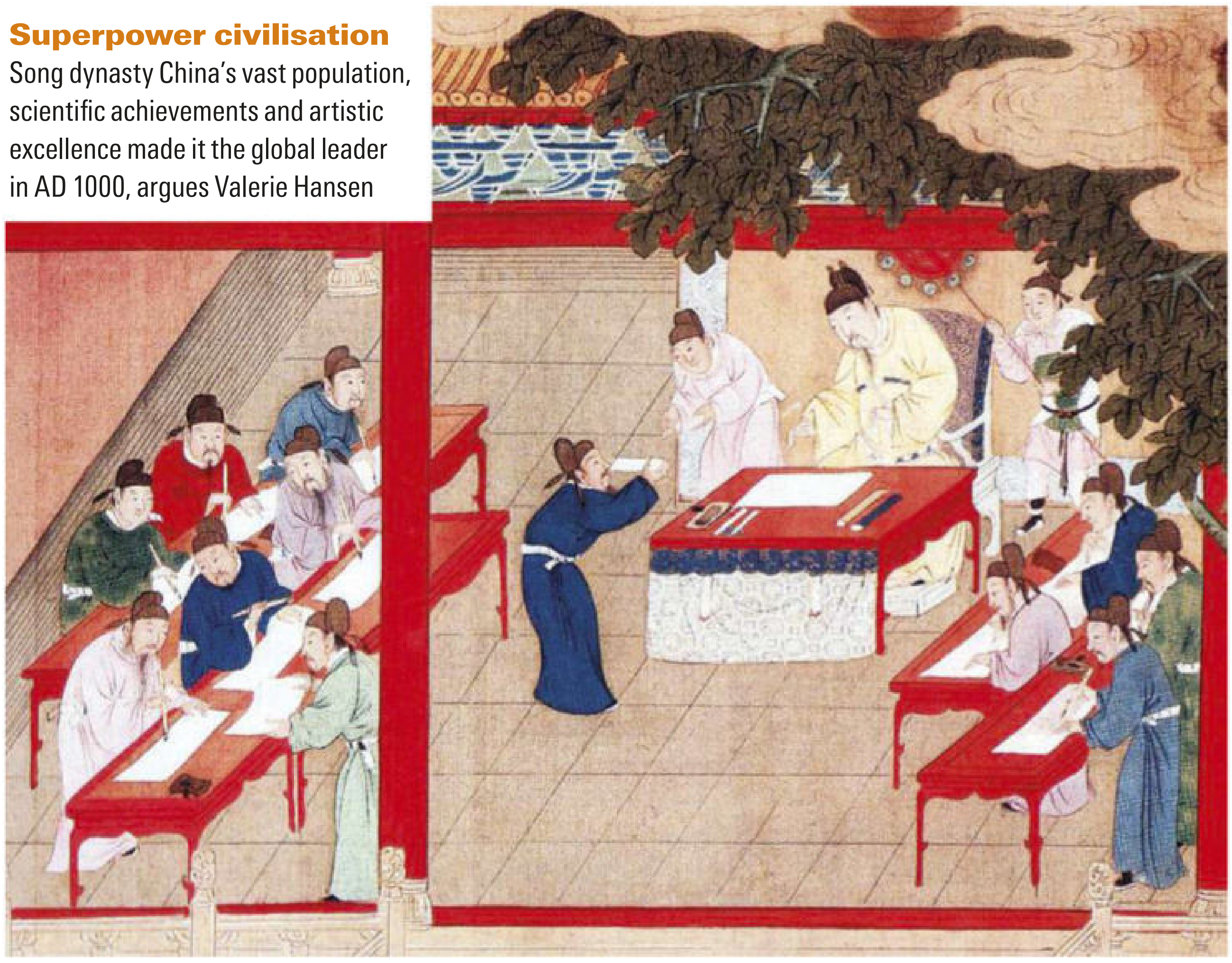
Was that a good thing? Well, I've spent a lifetime travelling in other cultures, and I disagree with those who argue the benefits of western imperialism and colonialism. For me, they were in the main destructive, and their consequences are visible everywhere in our current environmental crisis. As this book shows, it could have been different.

> With a bit of luck and a couple of good phrase books, you could set out from Dover, across Europe to Byzantium and Cairo

Sometimes what Hansen describes comes out of an older past – I would argue especially for the formative era of the Tang dynasty, the Carolingian Renaissance and the Caliphate. But *The Year 1000* offers both big ideas and riveting details: the smell of incense and spices wafting over Persian seaports, Tamil temples and Cantonese bazaars. It's a whole new way of looking at world history, accessible, readable and just the ticket for history buffs everywhere. If I manage to get to Greece this year, I shall take it with me to read again on the night train through Belgrade and Salonika, thinking of those who came that way a thousand years ago. H

Michael Wood is a historian, author and broadcaster. His next book, *The Story of China*, will be published by Simon & Schuster this September

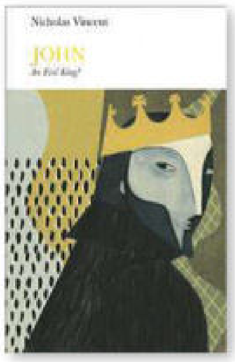
Superpower civilisation
Song dynasty China's vast population, scientific achievements and artistic excellence made it the global leader in AD 1000, argues Valerie Hansen



AKG IMAGES

MEDIEVAL

Bad reputation



John: An Evil King?
by Nicholas Vincent
Allen Lane, 144 pages, £14.99

The latest in the attractive Penguin Monarchs series, this little book offers an account of England's most notoriously terrible king. Vincent tackles this reputation head-on, describing a historical tradition that forever associates John with Magna Carta: his reign's most important achievement, coming from his greatest failure and humiliation.

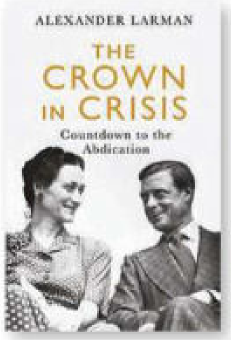
Our picture of John's military, governmental, and personal shortcomings has been shaped by hindsight: lionising the treaty made at Runnymede in 1215 as the foundation of legal liberties and justice against tyranny, brought about by John's inadequacies as both a king and human being. This is problematic constitutional history (not least because of the relative unimportance of the 1215 version of the charter, revoked within weeks). Yet the dark caricature survives, given flesh in the popular imagination by the legends of Robin Hood. Vincent seems to be preparing us for a dramatic rehabilitation of 'Bad King John' – but alas not. Vituperative criticism of John began before he was even crowned, and the ultimate verdict has never changed: he was a terrible king, largely because he was a terrible person. Having to content himself with that, Vincent asks: was John unlucky, or was he "inherently evil"?

He gives a straightforward, efficient account of John's family, youth, and reign, occasionally reflecting that vices pardoned in John's contemporaries were not forgiven of him. But as the evidence for John's awfulness mounts up – dishonesty, disloyalty, greed, rapacity, vicious cruelty, vindictiveness, ineptitude and cowardice – the question about luck or evil fades into the background. Vincent can no more avoid the gravitational pull of Runnymede than his predecessors: John was an unforgivably bad king, and his rebellious barons inadvertently changed English kingship for good in their desperate attempts to counter his tyrannies.

Laura Ashe, professor of medieval literature at the University of Oxford

ROYAL

Monarchy in a mess



The Crown in Crisis: Countdown to the Abdication
by Alexander Larman
Weidenfeld & Nicolson,
352 pages, £20

The royal soap opera saga of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle gives an uncanny topicality to this account of the last time a British royal gave up his regal responsibilities for an American wife: the 1936 abdication crisis. The two episodes echo Karl Marx's dictum that history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce. For where Edward VIII's slavish passion for the twice-married Wallis Simpson rocked the monarchy and threatened to bring down the government, Harry's devotion to another US divorcee has not had quite the same political impact.

Alexander Larman has done a thoroughly researched job in retelling this oft-told tale and has made some fresh discoveries that shed new light on the affair. In particular, he shows that a man named McMahon, who pulled a loaded gun on Edward, was in close contact with MI5 before the mysterious incident, and that the security service was bugging the king's phone on government orders throughout the crisis.

The book's two heroes are Walter Monckton, a smooth and skilful lawyer who brokered a solution to the crisis which satisfied all sides; and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, often seen as having a malevolent determination to force Edward off his throne. Larman portrays Baldwin much more sympathetically, with a human understanding of the king's dilemma, yet a steely determination to ensure that the crisis would not disrupt constitutional propriety, and that the royal show would go seamlessly on even after Edward's enforced departure.

In hindsight, the abdication was a blessing in disguise. Edward's Nazi sympathies and shallow, weak character would have made him a poor wartime monarch, and his pushy, grasping wife was too exotic for the staid society of 1930s Britain. They were two drones who deserved each other.

Nigel Jones, author of *Countdown to Valkyrie: The July Plot to Assassinate Hitler* (Frontline, 2008)

FROM FACT TO FICTION

On the road

Matthew Kneale on his new novel following a ragtag bunch of travellers on a holy journey

What inspired you to create a story about medieval pilgrims?
I first read about pilgrimages when I was researching a non-fiction book, *Rome: A History in Seven Sackings*, and the subject immediately appealed to me. I love writing about journeys, just as I love going on them, and I'm interested in people who travel not for ordinary reasons but because of beliefs they hold. I was particularly intrigued by the 13th century, as it was an age of intense religious fervour. The novel offered a great excuse for me to learn about medieval England, which was a new world for me, and one which I hugely enjoyed discovering.

Who are some of the characters you send on your fictional pilgrimage?
The characters were inspired by the wildly different motives that medieval people had for going on pilgrimage. A noblewoman wants the pope to grant her a divorce from her vicious husband. A professional pilgrim is paid to make the journey on others' behalf. A would-be saint wishes to showcase her devotion. A rich farmer's wife wants to outdo her neighbour with pilgrim badges to wear to church. A violent landlord is sent as punishment for punching an abbot. And one man hopes to free his dead cat from purgatory.
I wanted the characters to reflect the rich complexity and strangeness of life in the Middle Ages.

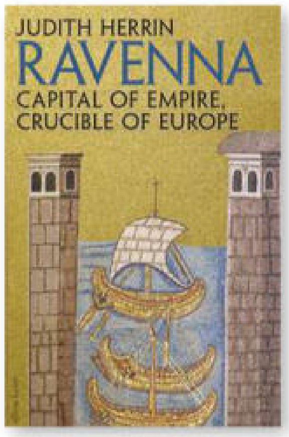
What dangers did pilgrims face on their journeys?
They greatly feared robbery and murder, though the dangers they encountered were usually more mundane. My characters endure pouring rain, muddy roads, blistered feet and flea-ridden dormitories in filthy inns. Their greatest challenge is crossing mountain passes in the Alps and the Apennines, where conditions could be brutal. And, of course, they also faced danger from one another.

Pilgrims
by Matthew Kneale
(Atlantic, 352 pages, £16.99)

EUROPE

City of stars

JONATHAN HARRIS applauds an evocative history of a city that once stood at the centre of the western Roman empire – and the cast of colourful characters who ruled it

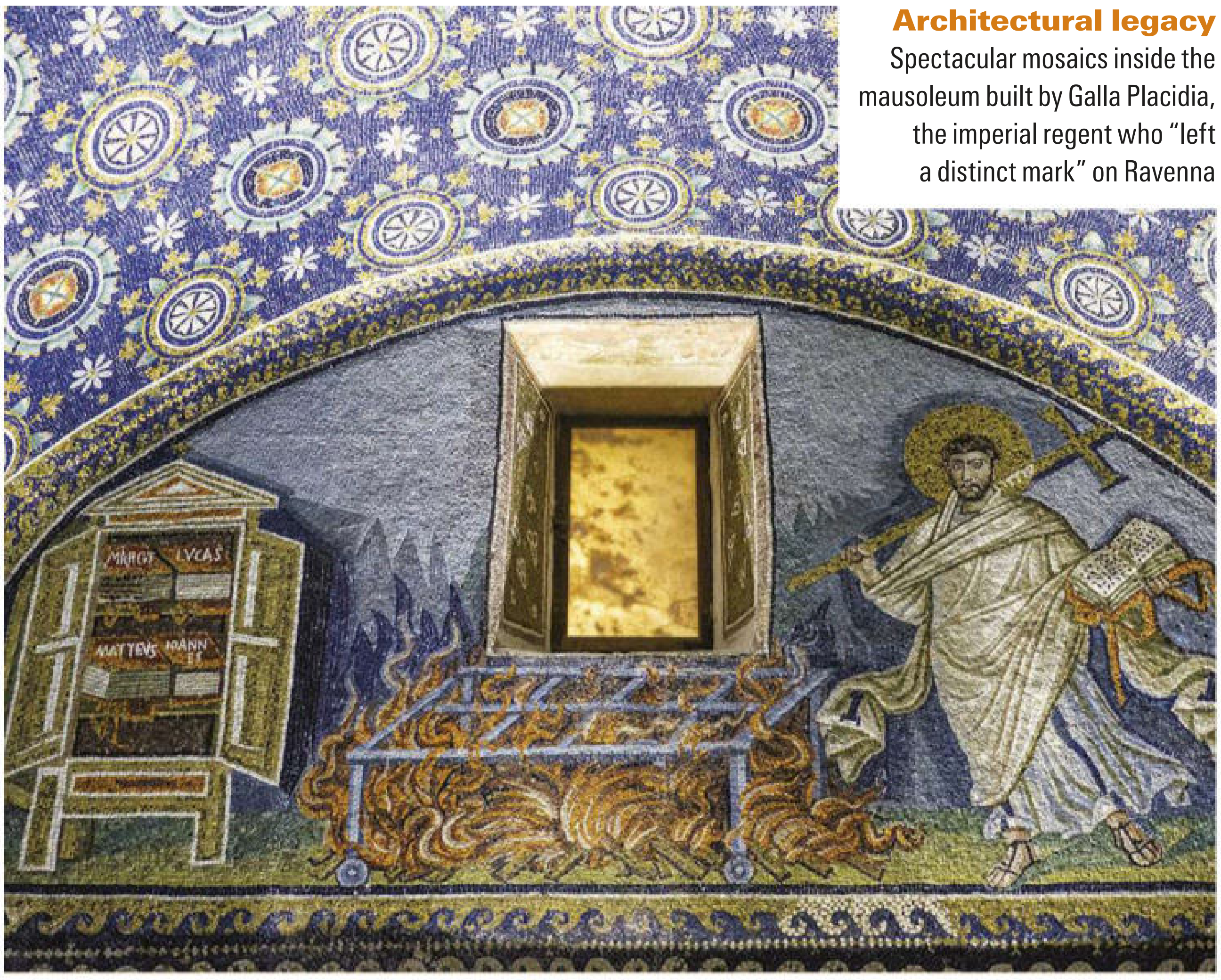


Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe
by Judith Herrin
Allen Lane, 576 pages, £30

Ravenna is a deceptive place, hiding its momentous history under the ambience of a quiet provincial city. In the evocative introduction to this new book, Judith Herrin describes how, during a visit to the Italian town on a hot summer's day in the 1970s, she felt frustrated that none of the available guidebooks placed the extraordinary early medieval buildings in any kind of coherent historical context. This book is the eventual result. Beautifully illustrated, impeccably researched and accessibly presented, it traces Ravenna's career as the capital of the Roman empire in the west.

The story begins in AD 402, when the western Roman emperor Honorius moved his court to the city to escape invading Goths, and comes to an end 400 years later, when it was absorbed into the empire of Charlemagne and sank back into obscurity. Broad surveys covering several centuries risk seeming impersonal, with major players coming and going with bewildering rapidity. That is not the case here, as Herrin follows the structure that worked so well in her *Byzantium: Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (2007) and makes a particular individual, building or event the focus of each chapter.

One of the most fascinating figures is Galla Placidia, daughter of Emperor Theodosius I. She was about 10 years old when she arrived in Ravenna, and after an unhappy marriage to the king of the Goths, she and her second husband produced an heir to her childless brother, Honorius. When the underage Valentian III succeeded in AD 425, Placidia ran the western empire as regent. She left a distinct mark on Ravenna by commissioning two major churches and developing the city's commercial and administrative importance. Her most tangible monument, a mausoleum with an ethereal starry-sky mosaic ceiling, still stands today.



Architectural legacy
Spectacular mosaics inside the mausoleum built by Galla Placidia, the imperial regent who "left a distinct mark" on Ravenna

There are plenty of other memorable characters, such as Archbishop Damianus (died 705/08) who was being shaved when a woman came to his palace begging for her dying baby boy to be baptised so he could gain a place in heaven. By the time the smooth-chinned prelate had descended, the infant had expired so, full of remorse, he took the body in his arms and carried it around the church until it came back to life again. Damianus quickly conducted the baptism ceremony before the child died a second time.

> **"Ravenna is a deceptive place, hiding its momentous history as capital of the Roman empire in the west under the ambience of a quiet provincial city"**

Buildings are also brought to life alongside the people who built and used them. These range from those that no longer exist, such as the Basilica Ursiana, to sites which can still be visited today, such as the church of San Vitale. It is famous for two mosaic panels showing Emperor Justinian I and Empress Theodora. Herrin discusses how and why these mosaics may have been commissioned, putting them in the context of the capture of Ravenna in May 540 by an army sent by the eastern emperor. It is this linking of tangible remains and historical record that is the book's great strength, along with its clear uncluttered prose which even cuts through the complexities of Catholic and Arian theology. By providing a guide both to what can still be seen and what happened in the past, the author has certainly fulfilled the task she set herself all those decades ago.

Jonathan Harris is professor of the history of Byzantium at Royal Holloway, University of London

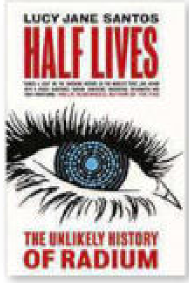
DREAMSTIME

ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** AND **MATT ELTON**

SCIENCE

Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium
by Lucy Jane Santos
(Icon Books, 320 pages, £16.99)



Radioactive fever

In the early 20th century, Britons clamoured for a seemingly magical new substance: radium. This supposed wonderstuff was packed into all kinds of everyday goods, from radium water sold over the counter at Harrods and glow-in-the-dark watches to radioactive hair tonic guaranteed to "give unparalleled satisfaction". Santos's book offers an alarming case study of how consumer culture can turn toxic.

ART HISTORY

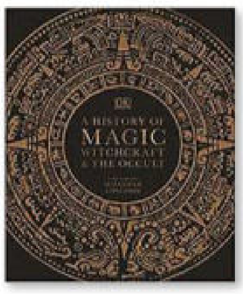
An Elephant in Rome: Bernini, the Pope, and the Making of the Eternal City
by Loyd Grossman
(Pallas Athene, 320 pages, £19.99)

Artistic double act

It's hard to think of a city more celebrated for its artistic heritage than Rome. But, argues Loyd Grossman, much of that reputation is down to a serious facelift that the Eternal City underwent in the 17th century. In this love letter to the 'city of statues', Grossman recounts how Pope Alexander VII and Bernini teamed up to create Baroque masterpieces that would see prestige heaped on the papal powerhouse.

SUPERNATURAL

A History of Magic, Witchcraft and the Occult
Foreword by
Suzannah Lipscomb
(DK, 320 pages, £20)

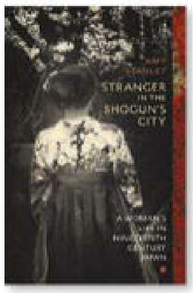


Into the mystic

Magical beliefs have appeared in an astonishing array of incarnations across global history, as this survey of everything from voodoo and tarot to Wicca reveals. Lavish images run throughout, with annotated pictures of magical objects including Egyptian amulets and Tibetan tooth necklaces. It may not go into great analytical depth, but it's an evocative starting point for anyone intrigued by supernatural history.

JAPAN

Stranger in the Shogun's City: A Woman's Life in Nineteenth Century Japan
by Amy Stanley
(Chatto & Windus, 352 pages, £16.99)

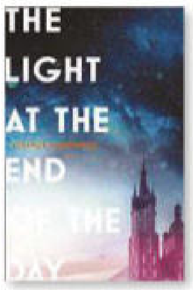


Independent woman

In the early 19th century, with three divorces under her belt, a woman named Tsuneno left her family behind in her village to begin again in the cosmopolitan hub of Edo. Stanley shows us Edo's back alleys, bustling markets and crumbling tenements through Tsuneno's eyes, offering a portrait of a city just before its cultural life was flooded with western influences, and it transformed into the Tokyo of today.

FICTION

The Light at the End of the Day
by Eleanor Wasserberg
(Fourth Estate, 320 pages, £14.99)

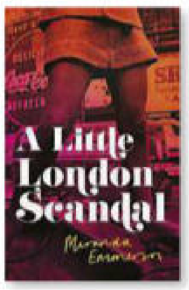


Art and atrocity

Inspired by Polish painter Józef Pankiewicz's 1897 portrait of a girl in a red dress, this novel opens in the city of Kraków in the years before the Second World War. Adam Oderfeldt commissions a painting of his daughter, Alicia – a sign of their sophisticated, comfortable lives. But when conflict breaks out everything changes, as the family is split up and forced to endure hardship and cruelty in Soviet labour camps.

FICTION

A Little London Scandal
by Miranda Emmerson
(Fourth Estate, 336 pages, £12.99)

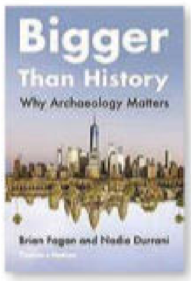


Sex and the sixties

London, 1967. Teenage sex worker Nik is arrested for murder but protests his innocence. His friend, Anna, fights to uncover the truth behind what happened – including the link to an MP with a less than stellar reputation. Weaving its way through the streets and squats of the capital, this novel is both a page-turning mystery and a moving evocation of the prejudice faced by gay people just half a century ago.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Bigger than History: Why Archaeology Matters
by Brian Fagan
and Nadia Durrani
(Thames & Hudson, 144 pages, £12.95)

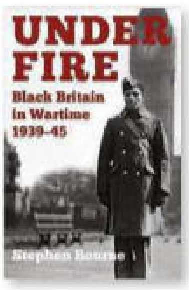


The not-so distant past

As suggested by a contents page studded with 21st-century concerns (climate change, gender identity), this book links the seemingly remote world of archaeology with the present day. Indeed, the stories of entire groups of people omitted from written texts can be told through the evidence beneath our feet. There are challenges, too, and the authors compellingly sketch some of the biggest risks faced by the discipline.

SOCIAL

Under Fire: Black Britain in Wartime, 1939–45
by Stephen Bourne
(History Press, 256 pages, £12.99)



Bravery and bigotry

Interweaving profiles of specific characters with chapters exploring wider context, this is an absorbing introduction to the experiences of black men and women in the Second World War. Some of the names will be familiar – doctor and campaigner Harold Moody, cricketer and politician Learie Constantine – while others may be new discoveries. Racism is cited frequently but so, too, is extraordinary courage.

Sex and the city

Jessica Brown Findlay stars in a drama series inspired by historian Hallie Rubenhold's exploration of the lives of Covent Garden sex workers

BBC

ENCOUNTERS

82 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT / TASTE
By **Jonathan Wright**, **Matt Elton** and **Sam Nott**
87 RECOMMENDED History drama series

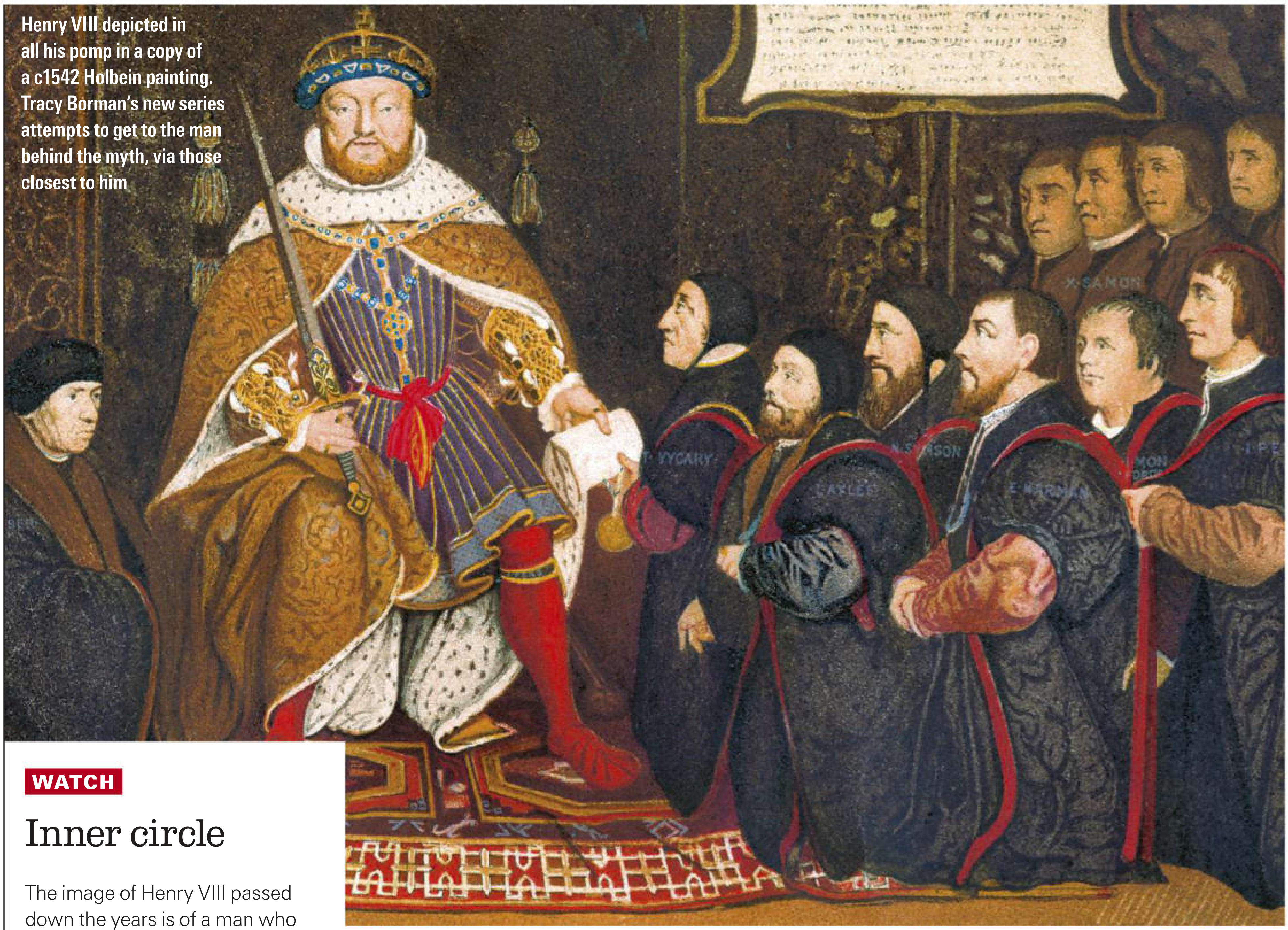
WATCH

Tales of the night

First shown on digital channel ITV Encore, *Harlots* has long deserved a bigger audience – and that now seems set to arrive, thanks to the BBC's acquisition of the three-series drama. Set in Georgian London, it's inspired by historian Hallie Rubenhold's book about Covent Garden sex workers, *The Covent Garden Ladies*.

At its centre lies Margaret Wells (Samantha Morton), a woman trying to reconcile her role as a brothel madam with being a mother. If that weren't tough enough, Wells's business comes under attack by Lydia Quigley (Lesley Manville), a ruthless rival madam. Jessica Brown Findlay (*Downton Abbey*) stars as Wells's daughter, the courtesan Charlotte, while seasons two and three of the series find Liv Tyler joining the cast.

Harlots
BBC Two / Due to air in August



Henry VIII depicted in all his pomp in a copy of a c1542 Holbein painting. Tracy Borman's new series attempts to get to the man behind the myth, via those closest to him

AKG-IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

WATCH

Inner circle

The image of Henry VIII passed down the years is of a man who was expansive to the point of being boorish: an insecure, vain monarch who created a crisis with the break with Rome just to change his wife. The truth, of course, is far more nuanced – as a new TV series from Tracy Borman, joint chief curator for Historic Royal Palaces, reveals by viewing Henry through the prism of the people around him.

The approach yields new insights, especially in the way it highlights not the movers and shakers of the Tudor world, but those such as Henry's teachers, fools and men-at-arms. The picture that emerges is of a relaxed man who was raised as a second son without the expectation he would inherit the throne, and who loved the rough and tumble of jousts and hunting. He was complicated, too: while often reflective and sensitive, he could also be naive and, rather surprisingly, prudish.

Henry VIII and the King's Men
The Smithsonian Channel /
Due to air Monday 17 August

LISTEN

Forces of history

Historian Margaret MacMillan's nomination of Benito Mussolini is among the more surprising choices for *Great Lives*, the radio series that looks closely at historical figures. It's a choice she makes "not because he's a hero, but an undeniable force of history".

The programme opens in 1943, when German troops extracted the Fascist leader from the mountain-top hotel in which he was held after being ousted from power in the wake of the Allied invasion. The need to be rescued seems to sum up his buffoonery – yet we must be careful in too easily dismissing Mussolini who, partly through his mastery of propaganda, held power for more than 20 years.

Later episodes include novelist Jessie Burton on Mexican artist Frida Kahlo; David Olusoga on Namibian freedom fighter Hendrik Witbooi; and Peter Frankopan on one of the founding fathers of Russian rocketry, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.

Great Lives
BBC Radio 4 and iPlayer / new series due to begin Tuesday 4 August

Benito Mussolini in 1940. The dictator is profiled in the latest run of the BBC's venerable biography series *Great Lives*

LISTEN

Land-grabbing travellers

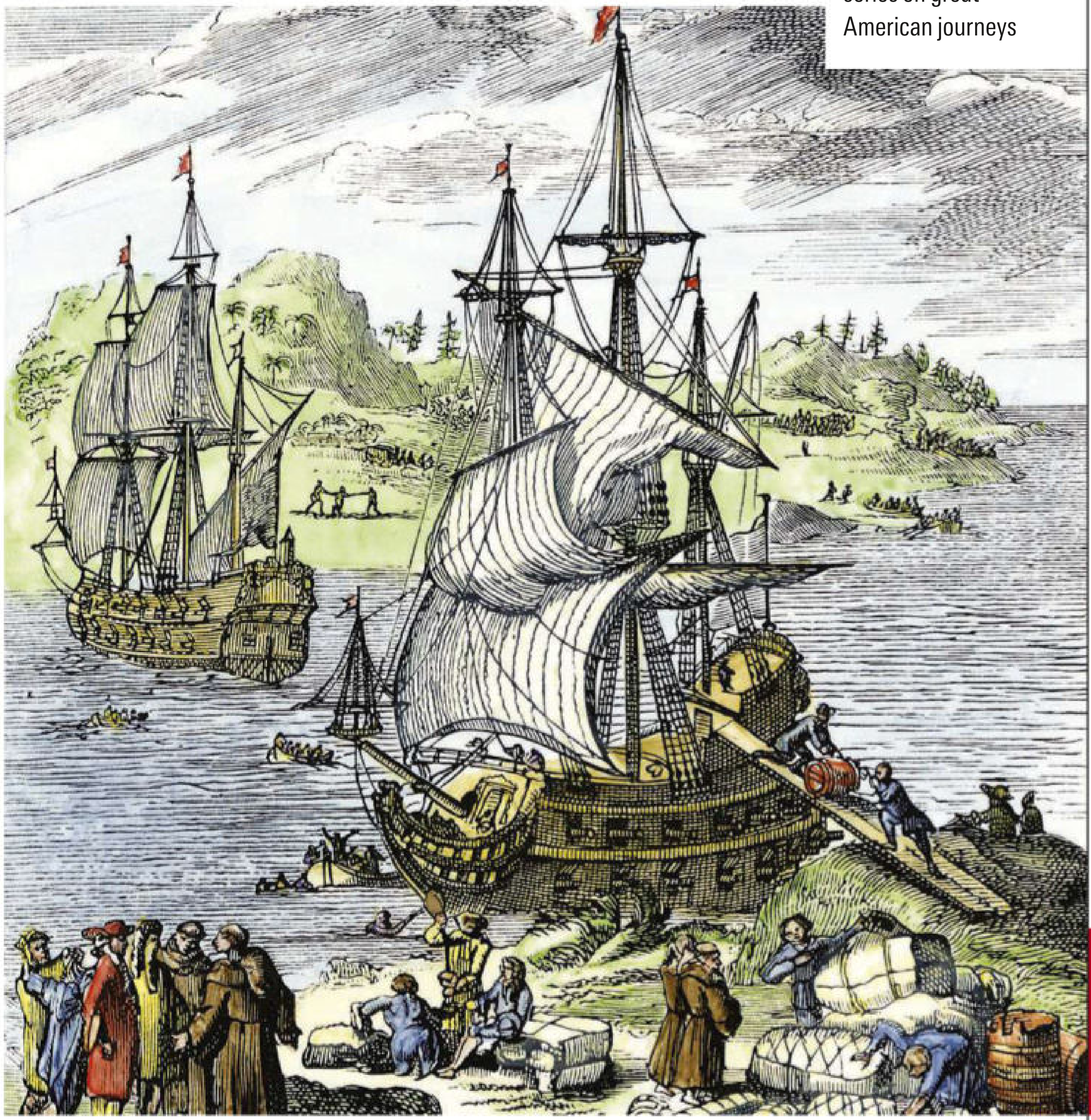
To travel is better than to arrive, at least for those you meet. That's one conclusion you could draw from a new series on the mindset of the American pioneer, which sees satirist Joe Queenan virtually recreating 10 journeys that built America in the years between the *Mayflower* and the first moon landing.

Frenchman René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle's 17th-century canoe journey down the Mississippi explains why Queenan is suspicious of getting somewhere and looking around. "The least interesting people I have ever met are those who stayed at home," says Queenan, saluting La Salle's sense of endeavour. He's far less keen on the way the explorer brazenly claimed the territory of Louisiana, an area that extended to French Canada and was far larger than the state that now bears the same name, for King Louis. Playing this forward, we shouldn't be surprised that the current US president is a "rapacious real estate developer", Queenan notes, because US history is full of people who"just showed up from Europe and stole land" – especially the English, who "stole everything".

Other subjects that Queenan covers in the series include the Lewis and Clark expedition that reached the Pacific in 1805; the crossing of the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska; and the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act, which created the interstate highway system.

From the Mayflower to the Moon

BBC Radio 4 / Due to begin weekdays from Monday 31 August



René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle reaches land in this woodcut. His voyage to establish a French colony features in a new series on great American journeys

ALAMY

Writer and poet Katherine Mansfield, whose 1921 short story 'The Stranger' is among the works being read in a season exploring the form

LISTEN

A life cut short

New Zealand-born Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) was just 34 years old when she died of tuberculosis. Yet in her brief life, this friend of DH Lawrence and Virginia Woolf crafted short stories that have established her reputation as one of the great modernist writers. Yet should her reputation be greater still? Should it, indeed, even match that of James Joyce? And *would* it be greater had she been a man?

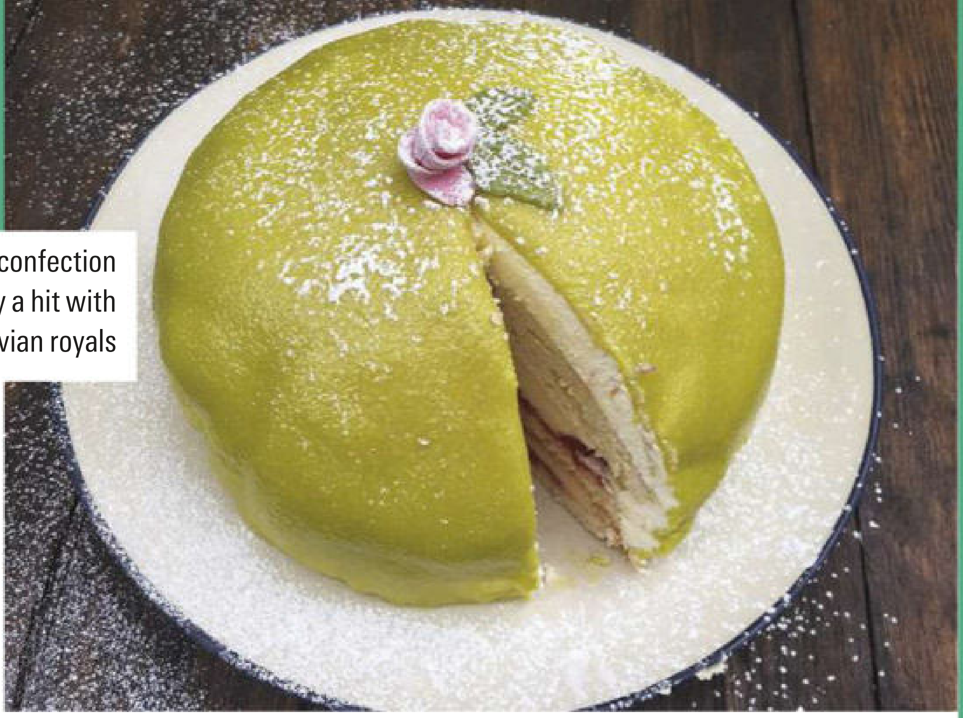
These are questions that underpin a new season of readings of some of her best-loved short stories, including 'The Stranger' (1921) read by actor Hugh Bonneville, a tale exploring a man's anxiety over seeing his wife as he waits for her to disembark from a ship. Also in the season, drama *Luxembourg Gardens* focuses on Mansfield's struggle with tuberculosis.

And Other Stories: Katherine Mansfield

BBC Radio 4 / Due to air from Sunday 9 August

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit *historyextra.com* for weekly updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

HISTORY COOKBOOK



This sweet Swedish confection was reportedly a hit with young Scandinavian royals

TASTE

Prinsesstårta

Brightly coloured and featuring sponge, jam, marzipan and cream, this Swedish layer cake first appeared in print in a 1948 cookbook. Originally bearing the more straightforward title 'green cake', it supposedly got its current name due to being a favourite of three young Swedish princesses in the early 20th century.

Difficulty: 6/10
Time: 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

For the vanilla patisserie cream:
1 vanilla pod
500ml whole milk
Six egg yolks
140g caster sugar
45g corn flour

For the cake layers:
Five eggs
150g caster sugar
130g plain flour
1 tsp of vanilla sugar

For the whipped cream:
700ml whipping cream
2 tbsps of icing sugar
1 tsp of vanilla sugar

For the marzipan lid:
A pre-bought marzipan lid, or 300g marzipan and green food colouring

Plus 75g raspberry jam, and 1 tsp icing sugar to sprinkle on top

METHOD

Heat the oven to 200°C (400°F). Split the vanilla pod, scrape out the seeds, and add to a saucepan with the milk. Bring carefully to the boil. Meanwhile, whisk the egg yolk and sugar until almost white, then turn off the whisk and add the corn flour. Turn the whisk back on to medium and slowly add the hot milk to the bowl, whisking continuously.

Pour the mixture back into the saucepan, bring back to the boil, and cook for one minute to thicken. Sieve the mixture into a bowl, cover with cling film, and put in the fridge to cool down completely before using.

Trace three identical circles on to baking paper, each 20-22cm in diameter. Place the circles on to flat baking trays.

Whisk the egg and sugar until white and fluffy, incorporating as much air as possible. Sift the flour and vanilla sugar into the egg mix and fold until fully incorporated.

Divide the batter between the circles. Bake until just golden brown – this will depend on your oven, but five minutes is usually adequate. Remove from the trays and leave to cool completely on a rack. Remove the baking paper.

Whisk the ingredients for the whipping cream on high speed until peaks form. They must be firm to hold the cake together.

Place the first layer of cake on to a serving plate. Spread a layer of jam, followed by a 1cm layer of patisserie cream. Add another cake layer and repeat until the final cake layer is on top.

Carefully add the whipped cream to the top of the cake in a 3-4cm dome shape, using a spatula to smooth.

Add the marzipan lid or, if you're making your own, add food colouring to the marzipan, roll it out into a circle and add to the top of the cake. Leave in the fridge for a few hours, and serve.

Recipe adapted from The Great British Bake Off

Visitors will be able to explore the V&A's Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk exhibition when the London museum reopens more fully on 27 August

SAMANTHA NOTT/GETTY IMAGES

VISIT

Reopen for business

Almost all areas of life have been affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic – including the UK's museums and galleries. Forced to shut in March as the nation entered lockdown, many are now preparing to welcome back visitors following updated government advice – albeit, understandably, rather tentatively.

Sites reopening include the V&A in London, the lower floors of which will be accessible from 6 August (with higher floors, and its Dundee branch, following on 27 August). The National Museum Cardiff will open in the week starting 24 August, while the People's History Museum in Manchester is opening on 1 September. All will have to adapt to new safety measures and social-distancing guidelines.

We will have more news on further announcements of museum openings and new exhibitions as details are disclosed throughout the coming months. And do check museum and gallery websites for details of what's happening with attractions in your area.

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE RECOMMENDS

Drama series to watch at home

Our series exploring the best historical entertainment to enjoy, without leaving the house, continues with some of our favourite small-screen episodic dramas. All are available to stream now via online providers

Pose

BBC iPlayer*

This series immerses viewers in New York's 1980s underground ball scene, in which queer people performed in a range of competitive categories in the hope of snagging trophies. Social issues abound, from LGBTQ identity and the Aids crisis to the challenges of surviving in a city in which wealth was increasingly seen as the ultimate goal. The show walks the line between fact and fiction: legendary ballroom figure Hector of House Xtravaganza consulted on the series, and although its drag 'houses', or constructed families, are fictionalised, they are heavily inspired by real 1980s examples. As such it offers a window into the lives of people who have historically been overlooked.
Rhiannon Davies *Subeditor*

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY
ANTI-ERA

Cate Blanchett plays real-life conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly in new drama series *Mrs America*

Mrs America

BBC iPlayer*

This critically acclaimed, 1970s-set series is based on the real stories of feminists who fought to pass an amendment to the United States constitution ensuring equal rights for all citizens, whatever their sex. First mooted back in the 1920s, the proposal gained new support thanks to the rise of the US women's movement – but, as portrayed here, was met with staunch opposition from conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly (Cate Blanchett). This battle, and the ways in which it changed the political landscape, make for gripping TV.
Rachel Dickens *Senior deputy art editor*

Wolf Hall

Amazon Prime

How do you do justice to a pair of novels so acclaimed that they earned Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's lowborn fixer, a seat at history's top table? The answer is to cast actors of the calibre of Mark Rylance and Claire Foy, and produce a drama series so nuanced, so visceral and so keenly observed that you almost feel yourself being immersed in Tudor England. Rylance (playing Cromwell) offers an understated masterclass – his face alone tells a thousand stories. And this is a story told quite brilliantly.
Spencer Mizen *Production editor*

The Durrells

ITV Hub*

Anyone whose holiday plans have been scuppered this summer should look no further than *The Durrells* for a slice of sun-drenched escapism. Adapted from naturalist Gerald Durrell's memoir *My Family and Other Animals*, this irresistibly frothy period drama follows a widowed mother and her squabbling children as they relocate to a crumbling mansion in 1930s Corfu. With steamy island romances, sibling rivalries, escaped convicts and a misadventure involving bats in a toilet, this is comfort viewing in its purest form.
Ellie Cawthorne *Section editor*

The Durrells dramatises the real exploits of young nature enthusiast Gerald Durrell and his family

The Trial of Christine Keeler

BBC iPlayer*

Christine (Sophie Cookson) is a fun-loving and confident, yet vulnerable, young woman. Still a teenager when she begins an affair with John Profumo (Ben Miles), she is soon drawn into a web of lies, cover-ups and exploitation – not least by the hungry press. Christine's friend Stephen Ward (James Norton) shaped her destiny, yet his 'little baby' ends up telling her own story. Written and directed by a female team, this dramatisation of the 1960s scandal reveals the era's hollow morals and the way in which society was built on misogyny.
Susanne Frank *Art editor*

Sophie Cookson stars in *The Trial of Christine Keeler*, telling the story of the 1960s Profumo affair

Vikings

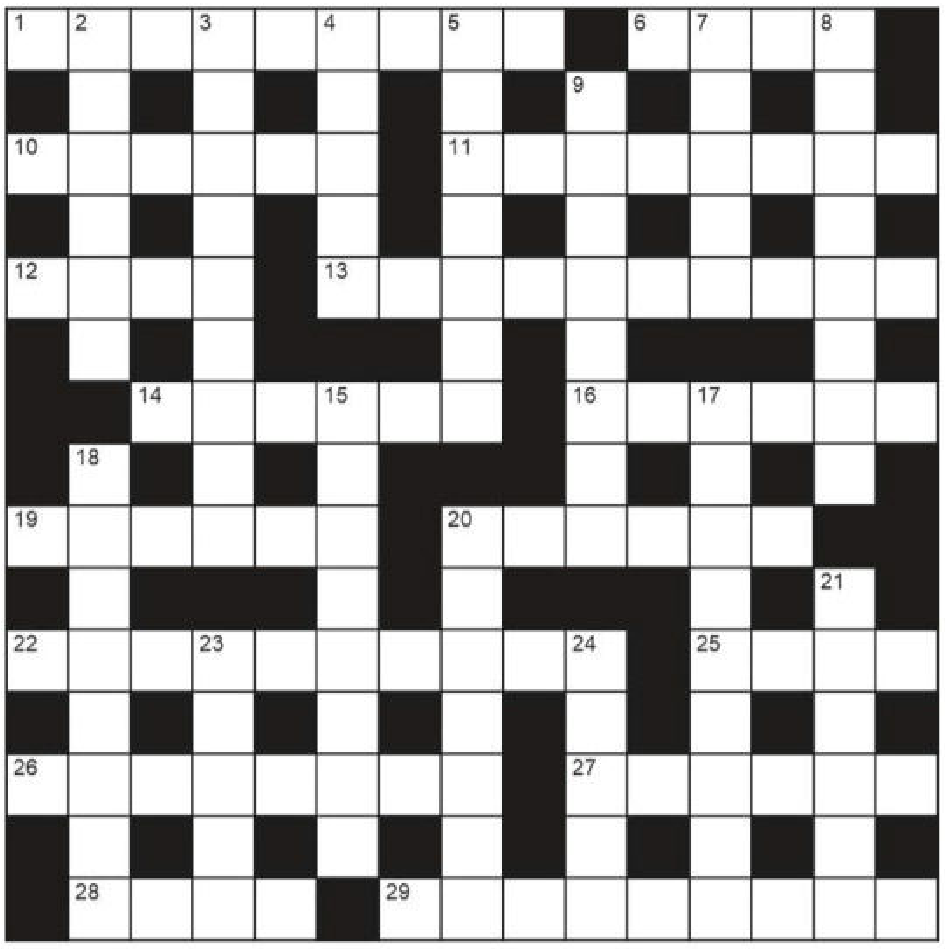
Amazon Prime

Atmospheric, brutal, and certainly the only series on this list in which a character is thrown into a pit of snakes – unless there's a particularly dark episode of *The Durrells* that I've somehow missed – this series isn't for everyone. Indeed, some moments are so bloody, I wasn't convinced it was necessarily for me. But somehow Michael Hirst's Norse drama keeps you hooked, whether through its mix of swordplay and spirituality or the way that it draws on the sagas of legendary Viking figure Ragnar Lothbrok.
Matt Elton *World history editor*

* Series free to watch at the time of writing

BBC/ITV/ALAMY

PRIZE CROSSWORD



Across

1 'The Monument', near London Bridge, commemorates this event, which destroyed most of the City of London in 1666 (5,4)

6 ___von Bismarck, the 19th-century chancellor and prime minister of Germany (4)

10 The battle of ___ (3 September 1650) was a decisive victory for Cromwell's troops over the Scottish army (6)

11/12 English traveller and administrator who, with T E Lawrence, helped put Faisal I on the throne of Iraq (8,4)

13 Maria ___, Italian physician who developed a 20th-century international system of education that harnessed children's creative potential (10)

14 Scottish outlaw (1671–1734), fictionalised by Sir Walter Scott as a romantic hero (3,3)

16 See 28 across

19 A Wessex king whose statue, built in 1899 to mark the millennium of his death, stands in Winchester (6)

20 Indigenous people of the Altiplano region of South America, conquered (though they retained some autonomy) by the Incas in the 15th century (6)

22 The most significant surviving Royal Navy warship of the Second World War, which played a key role in the D-Day landings (3,7)

25 Popular, though incorrect, name of the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain in London's Piccadilly Circus (4)

26 The California ____ ____, with its influx of fortune-seeking 'forty-niners', saw a population explosion in San Francisco (4,4)

27 Natural objects or animals, symbolic of a family group or tribe, etc (6)

28/16 Nickname of William Joyce, who made Nazi propaganda broadcasts to Britain and was hanged for treason in 1946 (4,3-3)

29 Her account of hiding from the Nazis with her family in a secret annex of an Amsterdam house has become a wartime classic (4,5)

Down

2 Last name of the German-born founder of a news agency. Formed in 1851, it became one of the world's leading news services (6)

3 British prime minister famous for the 1917 Declaration named after him, approving the establishment of a home for Jewish people in Palestine (1,1,7)

4 A large open area in ancient Rome used for public gatherings (5)

5 Period of British history when George III was deemed unfit and his son ruled in his stead (7)

7 (One spelling of) metallic neck rings/collars, eg the male ornaments used by ancient Britons, and adopted by the Romans (5)

8 Battle in 1898, which resulted in a decisive victory for Anglo-Egyptian forces over the Mahdists (8)

9/21 Berkshire site of an RAF station that was the focus of a Women's Peace Camp in the 1980s (8,6)

15 Sioux chief who, in the 1860s, led a successful campaign to stop the construction of the trail to the Montana goldfields (3,5)

17 Its cathedral houses the tombs of King John and Prince Arthur, elder brother of Henry VIII (9)

18 ___Line, an indicator of a ship's maximum load depth, instigated by the British MP after whom it is named (8)

20 A title, still in use today, granted in 1818 by the shah of Iran to Hasan Ali Shah, a spiritual leader of the Nizari Ismaili sect (3,4)

21 See 9 down

23 RAF legend Douglas ___, who despite having lost both legs in 1931, flew Spitfires in the Battle of Britain (5)

24 Practice, originating in Old Testament times, of lay people giving a portion of their income to the church (5)

……

Compiled by
Eddie James

Who is this Italian physician and educator? (see 13 across)

JOHN NICHOL
LANCASTER
The Forging of a Very British Legend

Signed book worth **£20** for **5 winners**

Lancaster

The Forging of a Very British Legend

By John Nichol

In this new book, Gulf War veteran John Nichol charts the epic story of one of the most famous RAF aircraft of the Second World War – the iconic Lancaster bomber – and describes the nail-biting experiences of the men who risked their lives flying over Nazi Germany. Prize copies will be signed by the author.

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (inc Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, September 2020 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***september2020@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **2 September 2020**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the November 2020 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our July 2020 crossword

Across 1 Brooke 4 Serbia 7 Ella 8 Parnassus 10 Skanderbeg 11 Penn 12 Daisy 14 Osnabruck 17 Calpurnia 18 Usury 20 Ebro 22 Cerne Abbas 24 Colosseum 25 Ruth 26 Belsen 27 Anders

Down 1 Balaklava 2 Owain 3 Kepler 4 Shanghai 5 Rosa Parks 6 Ibsen 9 Robespierre 13 Sophocles 15 Cervantes 16 Ericsson 19 Yeoman 21 Boche 23 Burke

Four winners of *The World Aflame*

T Carroll, Nottinghamshire; A Creery, Oxfordshire; G Hibbert, Flintshire; R Loomes, Norfolk

CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

● The crossword competition is open to all residents of the UK (inc Channel Islands), aged 18 or over, except Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited employees or contractors, and anyone connected with the competition or their direct family members. By entering, participants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions and that their name and county may be released if they win. Only one entry permitted per person. ● The closing date and time is as shown under How to Enter, above. Entries received after that will not be considered. Entries cannot be returned. Entrants must supply full name, address and daytime phone number. Immediate Media Company (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will not publish your personal details or provide them to anyone without permission. Read more about the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/* ● The winning entrants will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. The prize and number of winners will be as shown on the Crossword page. There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited's decision is final and no correspondence relating to the competition will be entered into. The winners will be notified by post within 20 days of the close of the competition. The name and county of residence of the winners will be published in the magazine within two months of the closing date. If the winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner-up. ● Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions, or to cancel, alter or amend the promotion at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, or if circumstances arise outside of its control. The promotion is subject to the laws of England.

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A selection of the exciting content on our website **historyextra.com**

History TV streaming highlights

Are you looking for a new historical TV show or film to watch? From *The Crown* to *The Favourite*, we have rounded up some of the best history content streaming on BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Now TV, HBO and other on-demand services in the UK and the US.

historyextra.com/what-to-watch

Francis Drake and the English slave trade

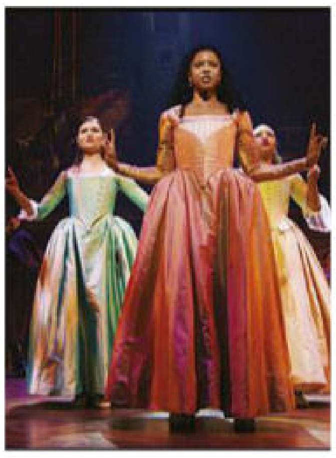
He was one of Queen Elizabeth I's most renowned sailors, famed for his role in the English victory against the Spanish Armada. But Drake also played a key part in England's involvement in the slave trade and was, says Professor Claire Jowitt, a murderer.

historyextra.com/drake-slavery

Path to peace

Given the vast scale of the Second World War, it did not simultaneously come to an end everywhere. Instead, it concluded in stages. Keith Lowe explains how and when the war officially finished, and asks, how important were the atomic bombs dropped over Japan in ending the conflict?

historyextra.com/ww2-end



Hamilton women

Find out more about the real women of Lin-Manuel Miranda's hit musical *Hamilton*, with insights from historian Ron Chernow on the Schuyler sisters and Alexander Hamilton's marriage – plus the affair that caused America's first great sex scandal.

historyextra.com/women-hamilton

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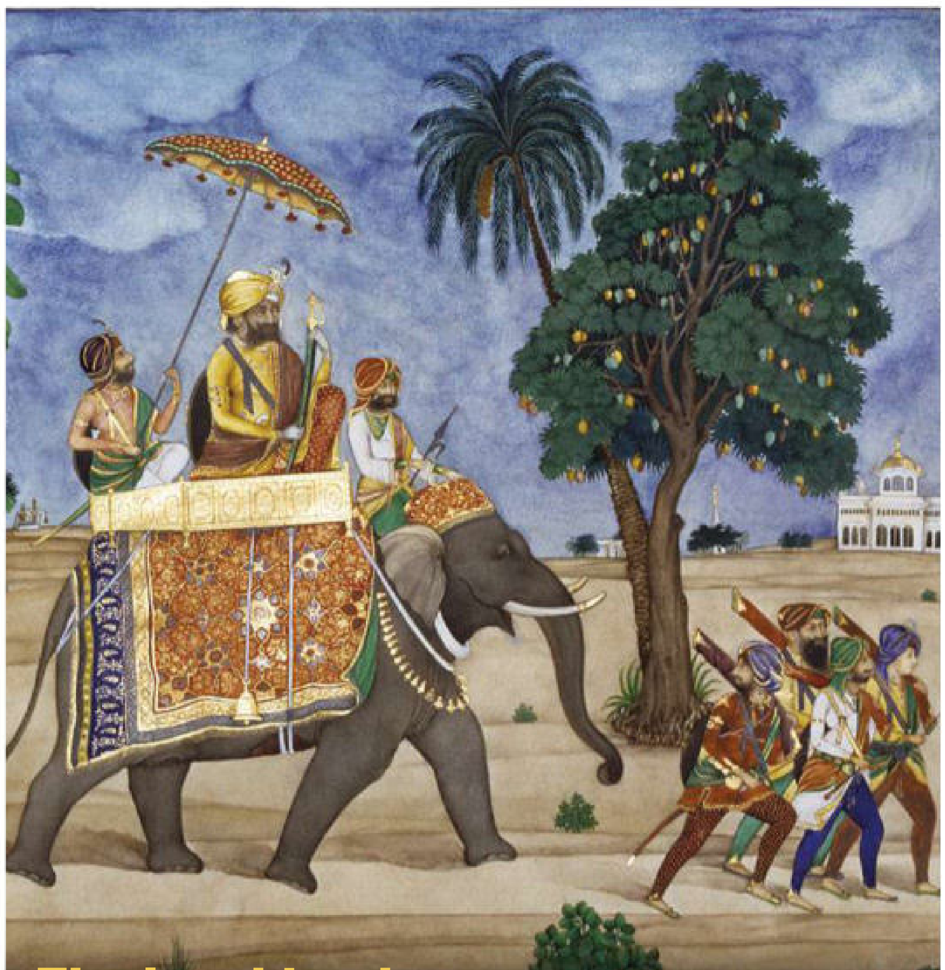
NEXT MONTH

October issue on sale 3 September 2020



The last kingdom

Priya Atwal tells the story of the remarkable royal dynasty that established the short-lived Sikh empire in 1799

Mayflower myth?

James Evans takes a fresh look at a foundational moment in US history

Medieval eels

John Wyatt Greenlee reveals how these fish played a crucial role in the economy of the Middle Ages

Anne Boleyn's final days

Tracy Borman on the confusion and controversies surrounding the queen's execution

Bernardine Evaristo, Booker Prize-winning novelist, chooses

Mary Seacole

1805–81

Mary Seacole as seen in a contemporary photo. Although she became famous for her nursing work in the Crimean War, her story subsequently became largely forgotten

IN PROFILE

Mary Seacole was a Caribbean-born, Anglo-Jamaican businesswoman and pioneer nurse best known for the comfort that she provided for wounded British soldiers in the Crimean War. Her 1857 autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, is one of the earliest memoirs of a mixed-race woman. In 2004 she was voted the greatest black Briton, and in 2016 a statue of her was erected in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital, London.

> " Seacole wasn't just ambitious and positive-thinking – she was also someone with a lot of integrity and passion to do good for other people in the world "

When did you first hear about Seacole?
I first heard about her when her autobiography was republished in the 1980s. She was celebrated in her day but then disappeared from history books, and it was an eye-opener to read about her extraordinary life.

Bernardine Evaristo was recently named Author of the Year at the 2020 British Book Awards. Her novel, *Girl, Woman, Other*, jointly won the 2019 Booker Prize, and is now available in paperback. *bevaristo.com*

What kind of woman was she?
Seacole was the daughter of a free Jamaican woman and a lieutenant in the British Army. She was an individualistic, self-motivated person who travelled a long way from her roots in Kingston, Jamaica. But she wasn't just ambitious and positive-thinking – she was also someone with a lot of integrity and a passion to do good for other people in the world.

What made Seacole a hero?
She was one of the first black British women to publish an autobiography. It's a fascinating memoir because we don't have much record of the black British presence in the 19th century, so it's astonishing to read about her life in her own words. She also put her nursing skills to good use during the Crimean War, at a time when Britain and the Caribbean were still living with the legacy of slavery. Her ethnicity doesn't seem to have got in the way of her leading her life.

What was Seacole's finest hour?
It was probably her time as a nurse in the Crimea, when she set up the British Hotel to care for wounded servicemen. She was a healer and herbalist, and practised her own herbalism on the soldiers – apparently very successfully. She must have been a formidable person to travel on her own as a woman of colour to Britain and then on to Russia, to tend for British soldiers during the war.

Why was she forgotten about for so long?
I think there are two reasons: because she was black, and because she was a woman. Women's history and black history tend to get lost, and she embodied both.

Can you see any parallels between Seacole's life and your own?
We are both mixed-race women, and I think that, like her, I'm also strong-minded, ambitious and driven. I suppose I've made history myself by becoming the first black British woman to win the Booker.

What would you ask Seacole, if you could meet her?
I would ask her what it was inside her that made her lead such an exceptional, brave life – and what she thought were the most important factors in shaping her into the person that she became. H

Bernardine Evaristo was talking to York Membery

LISTEN

In Radio 4's **Great Lives**, guests choose inspirational figures: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxsb*

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Thank you, Sylvia

Sylvia left a gift in her Will to help conquer Stroke

The first we knew of Sylvia was when we received notification of the gift she'd left us in her Will. Shortly after, a beautiful story of a much-loved woman began to unfurl.

Friends remembered Sylvia's kind-heart and her wish to help others. She spent part of her adult-life caring for her mother, and developed a passion for medicine. Becoming a medical secretary was her next step and, in the course of her career, she discovered the devastating impact a stroke could have on people and their families. She saw that research and treatment were vastly under-funded, and she decided to remember the Stroke Association in her Will.

Sylvia's gift has helped fund our work to conquer stroke. She's supported research to prevent and treat stroke, and she's helped care for survivors. And that's something you can do too – in the same way.

If you would like to learn more about remembering the Stroke Association in your Will, please get in touch.

Call 020 75661505 email legacy@stroke.org.uk
or visit stroke.org.uk/legacy

Stroke
association

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